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## Special Issue: Behavioral Factors in Pain and Musculoskeletal Disorders

Musculoskeletal disorders are the most common causes of severe long-term pain and physical disabilities, affecting hundreds of millions of people across the world. Joint diseases (e.g., rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis) account for half of all chronic conditions in persons ages 65 and over. Back pain and other soft tissue injuries are a major cause of sick leave. Injuries caused by traffic accidents and war, osteoporosis and its related fractures, and crippling diseases and deformities in childhood are important examples of other musculoskeletal disorders causing individual suffering and societal losses. The Bone and Joint Decade 2000–2010, which has been declared recently (Consensus Document, 1998), addresses these issues. The goals of the Bone and Joint Decade are to raise awareness of the growing burden of musculoskeletal disorders on society, empower patients to participate in decisions on their care, promote cost-effective prevention and treatment, and advance the understanding of musculoskeletal disorders through research. Numerous organizations in countries all over the world support this important initiative. In this context, this special issue of the *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine* is a timely event. Behavioral factors affect both the etiology and the prognosis of musculoskeletal disorders. Application of behavioral interventions contributes to the prevention of musculoskeletal disorders and to the reduction of pain, disability, and sick leave in patients with established musculoskeletal disorders. This special issue aims at furthering our understanding of the interactions between behavioral factors and musculoskeletal disorders. Its intent is also to stimulate contributions from this growing field of research to this journal. Contributions to this special issue focus on the role of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral factors in the etiology and prognosis of musculoskeletal disorders. The research reported in this issue addresses the role of several behavioral factors, including (a) various manifestations of emotional and physical distress; (b) coping, in particular catastrophizing; (c) physical activity and function; and (d) workload and demanding occupational and nonoccupational conditions. The influence of these factors on pain, physical disability, and psychophysiological parameters is assessed. Collectively, the six studies reported in this issue demonstrate the importance of behavioral factors in musculoskeletal disorders. Back pain and other nonspecific musculoskeletal disorders are the major topic of this special issue. Indeed, these disorders are highly prevalent, and they are a



major cause of pain, disability, and sick leave. Behavioral factors are of importance in other conditions as well; this applies to rheumatoid arthritis (also addressed in this issue), osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, injuries, musculoskeletal conditions in childhood, and many other disorders. Furthermore, whereas understanding the role of behavioral factors is of critical importance, effective prevention and treatment is the ultimate goal of research on musculoskeletal disorders.

Behavioral techniques are important in the prevention and treatment of musculoskeletal disorders. The outcome of these interventions should be carefully assessed. Research on both behavioral factors and behavioral interventions in musculoskeletal disorders is welcomed in future issues of this journal.

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Editors

#### **REFERENCE**

Consensus Document. (1998). The Bone and Joint Decade 2000–2010. *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica*, 69(Suppl. 281), 67–86.