

SAND abstract No. 82 from the BEACH program 2005–06

Subject: Prevalence and management of chronic pain

Organisations supporting this study: Janssen-Cilag Pty Ltd

Issues: Prevalence of chronic pain among patients attending general practice; conditions causing chronic pain; anatomical sites most affected; severity of chronic pain; managements being utilised by GPs; clinical opinion of GPs on adequacy of pain management for patients with chronic pain.

Sample: 3,211 respondents from 109 GPs; data collection period: 29/03/2005–02/05/2005.

Method: Detailed in the paper entitled 'SAND Method 2004–05' on this website:

<http://www.fmrc.org.au/publications/SAND_abstracts.htm>. Chronic pain was defined as 'pain experienced every day for three months in the six months prior to this consultation'.¹ Severity was ranked using Chronic Pain Grades.²

Summary of results

The age-sex distribution of respondents was similar to the distribution of patients at all BEACH encounters, with the majority (55.6%) of patients being female and 59.9% aged 45 years or over.

Of the 3,211 respondents, 586 (18.3%; 95% CI: 15.8–20.7) suffered from chronic pain. Prevalence was significantly higher for patients aged 45 years and over (25.1%) than for patients aged less than 45 years (8.6%). There was no significant difference between male (15.7; 95% CI: 13.1–18.2) and female (20.4%; 95% CI: 17.2–23.6) patients.

Conditions causing chronic pain were recorded at 535 encounters. More than one condition could be reported and a total of 538 recordings of 69 different causal conditions were listed. Osteoarthritis (29.0%), back problems (17.4%), arthritis NOS (10.8%), musculoskeletal problems (6.0%) and varieties of cancer (4.1%) were conditions most often listed.

Anatomical sites were reported for 502 patients. More than one site could be detailed and a total of 633 recordings of 14 different body sites were reported. Sites most commonly affected by chronic pain were the back (33.3%), knee (15.2%), neck/cervical spine (6.8%), and hip (6.8%).

Of the 570 patients for whom severity of chronic pain was reported, 30.0% had grade I pain (low disability, low intensity), 37.0% had grade II pain (low disability, high intensity), 23.2% had grade III pain (high disability, moderately limiting), and 9.8% had grade IV pain (high disability, severely limiting).

Medications and/or treatments for chronic pain management and/or side effects of pain medication were reported for 579 patients. A total of 838 recordings of 33 different medications and/or treatments were reported. Over one third (35.1%) took non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)/Cox-2s, a similar proportion used weaker opioids (32.0%), and simple analgesics were taken by 29.7%. Other treatments included herbal analgesics, and physiotherapy. Forty nine patients (8.5%) were taking no medication for pain management. GPs offered an opinion on adequacy of pain management for 40 of these 49 patients, reporting that pain was adequately managed for 33 of them (82.5%). Adequacy of pain management was reported for 506 patients using medication and/or other management. GPs reported that pain was adequately managed for 75.1% of these patients.

1. Blyth FM et al. 2001. *Pain* 89(2-3): 127-34. 2. Von Korff M et al. 1992. *Pain* 50(2):133-49

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PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

The shaded section of the following forms asks questions about **CHRONIC PAIN**.
 You may tear out this page as a guide to completing the following section of forms.

INSTRUCTIONS

Ask **ALL** of the **next 30 PATIENTS** the following questions
in the order in which the patients are seen.

Please **DO NOT** select patients to suit the topic being investigated.

Chronic pain

Please indicate by ticking the appropriate box whether this patient suffers from **chronic pain** (*defined* as 'pain experienced every day for three months in the six months prior to this consultation'*).

If **no** chronic pain has been experienced you should **end the questions** here.

**Blyth FM et al. 2001. Pain 89(2-3):127-134*

Medication for pain management and medication side effects

Please use the tick boxes to indicate whether the patient is **currently taking** any of the **nominated medications for pain management**, or to **relieve side effects of pain medication** (eg laxatives, acid suppressants etc). Tick as many as apply.

Beside the box labelled '**other**' you may write in **other medication/s** (not listed) or **other forms of treatment** used for chronic pain management instead of / as well as medication e.g. acupuncture

If **no medication** is being taken for pain management please tick the box labelled 'no medication'.

Beside each medication please **circle an option** to advise whether the medication was **initiated** by a GP (yourself or another) or a specialist, and the **approximate duration of usage in months or years**.

Condition and anatomical site/s affected

Please advise the **condition** you identify as being the **cause** of the patient's chronic pain.
 Please write the **anatomical site/s** nominated by the patient as being **most affected by pain**.

Severity

Ask the patient to rank the **severity** of their pain according to the **Chronic Pain Grades****:

- I = low disability-low intensity;
- II = low disability-high intensity;
- III = high disability-moderately limiting;
- IV = high disability-severely limiting.

***Von Korff M et al. 1992. Pain 50(2):133-149*

(this Chronic Pain Grade list is also on the laminated card in your research kit)

Adequacy of pain management

In **your clinical opinion**, is the current pain management **adequate** for the control of this patient's chronic pain?

Does this patient suffer from Chronic Pain? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes → <input type="checkbox"/> No - <i>end questions here</i>	If 'yes', from what condition? <input type="checkbox"/> Cancer <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <i>(please specify)</i> The anatomical site/s most affected by pain is/are? _____	In the past week how severe was the pain? <input type="checkbox"/> Grade I <input type="checkbox"/> Grade II <input type="checkbox"/> Grade III <input type="checkbox"/> Grade IV <i>(Pain Grades on card or green instruction page)</i>	Current medications for pain management (and side effects) are: <u>medication</u> <i>(tick as many as apply)</i> <u>initiated by</u> <u>duration of use</u> <input type="checkbox"/> transdermal fentanyl GP/spec ___wks/mths/yrs <input type="checkbox"/> oral slow-release morphine GP/spec ___wks/mths/yrs <input type="checkbox"/> control-release oxycodone GP/spec ___wks/mths/yrs <input type="checkbox"/> psychotropics GP/spec ___wks/mths/yrs <input type="checkbox"/> NSAIDS / Cox-Is GP/spec ___wks/mths/yrs <input type="checkbox"/> weaker opioids GP/spec ___wks/mths/yrs <i>eg tramadol; codeine prep'ns</i> <i>(please circle)</i> <i>(please circle)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> antidepressants GP/spec ___wks/mths/yrs <input type="checkbox"/> antiepileptics GP/spec ___wks/mths/yrs <input type="checkbox"/> rescue medication for breakthrough pain GP/spec ___wks/mths/yrs <input type="checkbox"/> laxatives GP/spec ___wks/mths/yrs <input type="checkbox"/> acid suppressants GP/spec ___wks/mths/yrs <input type="checkbox"/> no medication GP/spec ___wks/mths/yrs <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ <i>(please specify)</i>	Is pain management adequate? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
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Management of menopausal symptoms & related health risks -

Reasons for medication use

Please circle as many as apply.

1. menopausal symptom management;
2. prevention of osteoporosis
3. treatment of osteoporosis
4. cardiovascular protection
5. breast cancer prevention
6. vaginal atrophy
7. decreased sexual interest
8. other reason - please **specify** this in the space provided.

Severity of Chronic Pain - **Chronic Pain Grades**

- I. low disability - low intensity
- II. low disability - high intensity
- III. high disability - moderately limiting
- IV. high disability - severely limiting