SAND abstract No. 150 from the BEACH program 2009–10

Subject: Chronic pain in general practice patients

Organisation supporting this study: Janssen-Cilag Pty Ltd

Issues: The proportion of patients attending general practice who suffer from chronic pain; conditions causing chronic pain; severity of pain (by pain severity grades) for these patients; management of chronic pain; GP and patient satisfaction with current pain management.


Method: Detailed in the paper entitled SAND method 2009–10 at: <www.fmrc.org.au/publications/SAND_abstracts.htm>. Method for this study: Chronic pain was defined as ‘pain experienced every day for three months in the six months prior to this consultation’ (Blyth FM et al. 2001). Severity was graded as: Grade I = low disability/low intensity; Grade II = low disability/high intensity; Grade III = high disability/moderately limiting; Grade IV = high disability/severely limiting (Von Korff M et al. 1992). Satisfaction was graded on a scale of 1 (highly dissatisfied) to 5 (highly satisfied). Pain impact was measured with the ‘Living better with pain’ log (American Chronic Pain Association 2005), from 1 (best) to 10 (worst). These definitions were supplied on a card for participating GPs.

Summary of results

The age–sex distribution of patients differed significantly from that of patients at all 2008–09 BEACH encounters, with greater proportions aged 1–4 years and 25–44 years, and lesser proportions aged 65–74 years and being male patients. Of the 2,780 respondents, 523 (18.8%, 95% CI: 16.3–21.3) had chronic pain. The age-specific rates showed prevalence increasing with patient age. Sex-specific rates showed no significant difference between sexes in chronic pain prevalence.

The ‘cause of pain’ was given for 510 (97.5%) patients: cancer was the cause for 2.4% of these; osteoarthritis for 48.6%; other arthritis for 7.1%; and back problems for 29.2%. Nearly one-third (29.2%) of patients nominated ‘other condition’ as the cause of their chronic pain, 65.1% of these being musculoskeletal conditions, and 14.7% neurological conditions. Pain severity was recorded for 500 patients (95.6%), and ranked as Grade I for 23.6%, Grade II for 37.8% of, Grade III for 29.6%, and Grade IV for 9.0% of these patients.

Current management was reported for 496 patients (94.3%), of whom 52.6% were currently managing their chronic pain with medication only. Medication in combination with other treatment was used by 31.9%, while 8.5% were using other managements (no medication), and 7.1% were not using any type of pain management. For the 419 patients taking medication, 623 medications were recorded, of which 32.9% was paracetamol, and 10.0% was paracetamol/codeine. Oxycodone (6.7%), meloxicam (5.8%) and tramadol (5.8%), were also frequently recorded. A total of 247 other management methods were reported for the 200 patients using them, physiotherapy (29.6%), heat therapy (10.5%) and exercise (8.9%) being most common.

GP satisfaction with pain management was recorded for 497 patients, and patient satisfaction with pain management for 502 patients. The mean GP satisfaction level was 2.5, and the mean patient satisfaction level was 2.7. For 498 patient respondents who ranked the impact of pain (when in pain) on activity, sleep and mood (1 = best; 10 = worst), the mean level of impact on activity was 4.7, on sleep was 4.8, and on mood was 4.8.

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**Definition of Chronic Pain** - ‘pain experienced every day for three months in the six months prior to this consultation’*

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

**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


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**Live Better with Pain Log**

**Pain Level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Pain</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>worst Pain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Normally active</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>No activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sleep**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fully rested</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Poor-quality sleep</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mood**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cheerful &amp; calm</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Depressed, anxious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from: Live Better with Pain Log; © Copyright: 2005
The American Chronic Pain Association
http://www.theacpa.org/documents/8%205x11%20Pain%20Log%202-8-06.pdf
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.

Causal conditions
Please advise the condition/s you identify as being the cause/s of the patient’s chronic pain.
Tick as many as apply.

Severity
Please use your clinical opinion to rank the severity of the patient’s pain when the patient is in pain as you perceive it 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.

In the Chronic Pain Grading list is also the chronic pain card in your research kit

Satisfaction with pain management
Please circle a number on each of the scales to indicate:
1. your satisfaction level with the pain management
2. the patient’s satisfaction level with their pain management.

Pain level and functioning
Referring to the ‘Live better with pain log’ tool on the chronic pain card please ask the patient to indicate their pain, activity, sleep and mood levels when they are in pain and write the corresponding number in the space provided.

Does this patient suffer from chronic pain?
☐ Yes
☐ No → End questions

If ‘yes’ from what condition?
☐ Cancer
☐ Osteoarthritis
☐ Other arthritis
☐ Back problem
☐ Other condi’n
(please specify)

When the patient is in pain how severe do you judge the pain is?
☐ Grade I
☐ Grade II
☐ Grade III
☐ Grade IV
(Pain grades on card or green sheet)

If the pain is currently being managed, how?
☐ Medication... (please specify)
   □ Name & Form
   □ Strength
   □ Dose
   □ Frequency
   1. ______________
   2. ______________
☐ Other management (please specify)
☐ NO management
(please specify)

Satisfaction with pain management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GP satisfaction level</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highly satisfied</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Patient satisfaction level | (Please circle a number) | Highly satisfied

Ask the patient to rate the impact of pain on the following functions when in pain:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pain level</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Sleep</th>
<th>Mood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>__________</td>
<td>________</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>