

# Prevalence and impact of pain in older people

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Pain in Older People Workshop

26th February 2020

# Do older adults report pain less often?

- Older adults fail to report pain
- HCP seen as experts
- More Stoical
- Don't like to complain
- 7-minute consultation

# Do older people feel less pain?

Pain Prevalence increases with advancing age.

Some suggest a decrease over 80 years

63% of older adults with dementia had chronic pain compared to 54% of adults without dementia

**Is pain a normal part of ageing?**

More common pain syndromes occur with ageing – knees, hips & feet

Low back pain

Osteoarthritis, osteoporosis

Females more likely

Obesity associated with CP

## Does age affect pain?



Coping with pain may be harder with advancing age due to additional age-associated losses of physical, sensory, and other resources.



CP more normative in older age



CLBP increases but QoL equal or higher

# Pain & Ageing

- Pain is often perceived to be a natural part of ageing (2008).
  - *“its expected at my age”*
  - *“You get used to it”*
  - *“I don’t like to complain”*
  - *“I don’t want to be a burden”*



# **Pain is a very common problem for older persons**

## Most frequently reported symptom

- > 50% of community-dwelling
- > 80% of nursing home residents
- 0-93% !
- Schofield et al (2020)

19% of older persons admitted to the hospital have moderately or extremely severe pain

Cancer is the second leading cause of death over 65 years old

**Crude Prevalence**

0-93% !

- community ranged from 20-46%.
- residential care was higher and ranged from 28-73%.

Highlights the variations between studies



So is pain inevitable?



# Impact of pain on older adults

- **Chronic pain is associated with**
  - Poor general health (physical, psychological, social) *Smith et al 2001*
  - Increased mortality *Torrance et al 2010*
  - Increased resource use (carers, NHS, benefits) *Maniadakis and Gray 1999*
- **In older adults chronic pain is**
  - Often under-reported *Sofaer-Bennet et al 2007*
  - More likely to be intense, disabling and need treatment *Elliott et al 1999*
  - Particularly likely to cause isolation, disability and depression *Citra et al 2006*

## **Impact of Pain**

Self-reported inability to walk 3 blocks (Patel et al 2013)

Moving about, normal tasks, recreational activities, sleep and psychological functioning (mood, enjoyment of life) Rhonda et al 2009)

Poor QoL & disability (Garin et al 2014)

Pain interferes with everyday life & increases incrementally (NorStop) (Thomas et al 2004)

# So what are we talking about here?

- ❖ Self care
- ❖ Family home
- ❖ Social
- ❖ Recreation
- ❖ Sexual
- ❖ Housework
- ❖ Climbing stairs
- ❖ Bathing
- ❖ Washing hair
- ❖ Opening jars, tins and packets
- ❖ Turning on taps
- ❖ Carrying saucepans
- ❖ Filling a glass
- ❖ Walking outside
  - ❖ And many more

# Perspectives from Older People

- ▶ Pain is exhausting... You have to walk slowly. You have to stop and make an excuse or pretend to look in a shop window so that you can put your hand on the window and rest a moment. It's humiliating”.
- ▶ ‘Pain is frustrating because you can't do things for yourself...Everything's a challenge.’
- ▶ ‘I get very depressed and anxious about it...it's frightening, especially when you live on your own.’
- ▶ ‘Pain can make you feel lonely because you feel that you're the only one that is suffering and can cope with it, and that is a lonely experience.’

*Extracts taken from ‘listening events’ and interviews held with older people who suffer pain (Help the Aged )*

# Patient Involvement with Treatment Decision-making

- *I've been asking for that OxyContin, [but] nobody will [prescribe it]. They're afraid I'll become addicted. I'm almost 76. What kind of addict am I gonna be? ... It's not fair.*
- Older adults with chronic pain refuse treatments (Teh et al 2009)

# Patient Involvement with Quality of Care

- *I don't say negative things. I don't do that. I won't do that to anybody. And, I just didn't go back.” She also had a negative reaction to a cortisone shot and similarly decided not to say anything about it. “I won't do that ... I don't want to hurt anybody, I don't want anybody to get into trouble, any kind of trouble.”*

Teh et al 2009

# Working Outside the Patient– Provider Relationship

- Mary, age 85, was cutting back on her medications, “*trying to see if [she could] get along without as much*” and hoped that her HCP would “*let [her] mind [her] own business*” in this regard. (Teh et al 2009)
- *I'm jumping to the homeopathic*
- *You just keep experimenting*



# Not Wanting to Be Harmed

- *because after all, they're the doctors, they have the degrees. And I let them decide.*
- *being “nice” to their HCPs*
- *I don't want to hurt her because she's a great lady, and she's helped me tremendously.*
- *being a good patient*
- *you don't want to take up too much of their time*

## **Role of the Provider:**

# **Understanding, Remembering, Hearing, and Consistency**

- *I worried that he would be seen as a “drug-seeker” and as a result he delayed seeking treatment for his pain “because I just had a feeling that people wouldn't understand me*
- *They don't feel my pain*
- *I felt that they're really not interested in me – Being Heard*
- *I have a lot of confidence in my ... doctor. And we can sit down and talk ... I've been going to him for about 17 years*

# "I feel so stupid because I can't give a proper answer..." How older adults describe chronic pain: a qualitative study

[Amanda Clarke](#) , [Geraldine Anthony](#), [Denise Gray](#), [Derek Jones](#), [Paul McNamee](#), [Patricia Schofield](#), [Blair H Smith](#) & [Denis Martin](#)

[BMC Geriatrics](#) 12, Article number: 78 (2012) | [Cite this article](#)

# **Diversity in conceptualising pain using a simple numerical score**

*It's all right when I'm in bed, as soon as you get up in the morning it starts again. It more or less remains until it fades itself away, you know, towards the end of a fortnight.'* (Caucasian Female 4, aged 79 with back pain).

# Personalising the meaning of pain by way of stories, similes and metaphors

- Bones rubbing together, sensation of running water.
- *I can't really explain to you how embarrassed I feel because really there isn't words to explain... "That I don't have the vocabulary and I haven't got the medical vocabulary. I don't have the jargon to explain what I'm feeling.'*

# Contextualising pain in relation to impact on everyday activities

- *Some things take much longer than before. I can only do limited gardening, you know, like cut the grass or that and I do it in wee stints.’ (Caucasian Male 18, aged 75 with joint pain.”*
- *I belonged to three walking clubs at one time and would still like to go out walking, but I end up keeping everyone back because I’m so slow and I’m embarrassed by it, and I’m very sore. ’ (Caucasian Female 2, aged 78 with hip pain)."*
- *Och well I can’t walk, I can’t go shopping in malls and things like that. I’m no use to my friends because they’re all active, everybody wants to go for a walk and I can’t.’(Caucasian Female 1, aged 72 with back and knee pain)."*

# Pain Assessment

- ❖ Listen Carefully – what words are used
  - ❖ May deny pain but admit to discomfort, aching, soreness
    - ❖ Do you hurt anywhere?
    - ❖ Are you uncomfortable?
    - ❖ How does it affect you?
  
  - ❖ - Believe the patient

## Possible technological solutions



- Flossie Chambers, 89, playing 10-pin bowling at the Sunrise Senior Living Centre, Edgbaston  
Daily Telegraph, 14 September 2007
- “Digital natives” are growing up!



# Guidelines for Assessment of Pain in Older Adults

## **The Assessment of Pain in Older People: UK National Guidelines**

Pat Schofield

*Age and Ageing*, Volume 47, Issue suppl\_1, March 2018, Pages i1–i22,

<https://doi.org/10.1093/ageing/afx192>

**Published:** 19 March 2018    **Article history** ▼

# Global Year

IASP Launches 2019 Global Year Against Pain in the Most Vulnerable Populations

Feb 13, 2019

2019 is the Global Year Against Pain in the Most Vulnerable Populations



**2019**  
EUROPEAN  
YEAR **AGAINST**  
PAIN IN THE MOST  
VULNERABLE

# Guidelines for the management of pain in older adults

## **Guidance on the management of pain in older people**

By British Geriatrics Society, British Pain Society | 1 October 2013



"I prefer 'Baby Boomer' rather than 'Senior Citizen'."