

PAIN ASSOCIATION SCOTLAND

Pain Association Scotland provides specialist education, training and support in the self-management of chronic pain. The organisation has developed expertise in an effective interactive person-centred approach which helps to engage people in the principles of self-management and motivates them to adopt new ways of thinking based on a better understanding of their health and themselves.

Authors

Professor Sonia Aitken – CEO Pain Association Scotland

Affiliations

Visiting Professor – York St John University



Introduction

Chronic pain is a significant public health issue in Scotland, affecting individuals’ quality of life and the healthcare system. It is estimated that 1 in 5 people in Scotland suffer from chronic pain, with a higher prevalence in older adults and those in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas. For the majority of those suffering from chronic pain, it is not about the length of time they have had the pain, it’s about the loss of function, loss of identity, loss of mental health and indeed for many, a loss of hope. (Eccleston, 2011, 2016). (1)

Self-management is a crucial component of Scotland’s health reform, with a focus on empowering individuals to take control of their health. The concept reflects a shift from traditional, clinician-driven care towards a more person-centered approach, encouraging patients to actively participate in their own healthcare.

Objective

To investigate the perceived benefits of supported self-management among individuals with chronic pain who have regularly attended a local group (either on-line or in-person) over a period of 12 months.

To explore the physical, psychological, and social benefits of self-management for individuals with chronic pain using a series of questions around their health and quality of life.

Methodology

People who regularly access the monthly supported self-management group sessions were asked to complete a questionnaire via Survey Monkey. This was also available in printed version to ensure everyone who wanted to participate had the opportunity.

The survey was issued to the regular group attendees and we received 90 responses – 58 responded on-line and 32 via paper copies at the in-person groups.

Results

Key outcomes from the survey show:-

- 99% found benefit from attending the sessions
- 95% felt able to cope better on a daily basis
- 80% had fewer visits to their GP regarding their pain
- 67% have changed their view on the effectiveness of chronic pain medications
- 56% have had fewer flare ups

Analysis

This evaluation focuses on key outcomes related to the patient’s ability to manage their health independently, the reduction in disease-related symptoms, and improvements in both mental and physical well-being. The sessions are based on a Bio-Psycho-Social model of health which explores the impacts of a change in health and seeks ways to address any mal-adaptations that can often easily develop.

The core idea of the sessions are that pain affects life and life affects pain – if we are able to improve either, we improve both.

We can see with that the majority of those accessing our service are of working age which is vitally important that such individuals receive continued support to remain in work or even helped back into the workplace. Furthermore, the majority of people have been living with their pain for over 10 years.

The top three referral pathways were Pain Clinic, GP and self-referral. It is vitally important that more referrals are received from a Primary Care setting to ensure that self-management is seen as a vital resource at the start of a patient’s journey.

Conclusion

The findings highlighted that improved pain management strategies, early intervention, and a multidisciplinary approach are crucial to mitigate the long-term effects of chronic pain on individuals and the broader society.

Overall, the evidence strongly supports the use of self-management strategies for improving outcomes in chronic pain. These interventions not only reduce pain but also enhance psychological well-being, self-efficacy, and physical function, leading to better quality of life and decreased healthcare utilization.

Thank you so much for running these groups you have helped so many people over the year to cope with chronic pain that like me the NHS basically wrote off.

Only people who use this service can honestly say the importance & impact this service provides has in supporting with practical & educational advice. Thanks to areas that provide the funding needed for this service.