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Perception of Breakthrough Pain in Patients with Chronic Painful Conditions

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# Perception of Breakthrough Pain in Patients with Chronic Painful Conditions

## Background
- Breakthrough pain has been defined as “an exessive increase in pain to greater than moderate intensity, which occurs on a background of moderate intensity pain or in a patient requiring chronic opioid therapy.”
- However, pain flares may also be experienced by patients with medical conditions that are not routinely treated with opioids.
- An understanding of how patients characterize their pain flares will improve the scientific and clinical community’s ability to communicate with this population.

## Objective
- To understand how patients with chronic non-cancer pain define and describe pain flares

## Study Design
- A 3-month prospective, observational study of patients at a large U.S. tertiary care center
- Follow-up consisted of a 1 week diary administration at baseline, then a monthly telephone survey for 3 consecutive months

## Methods
### Sample Population
- Patients who had chronic pain due to one or more of the following medical conditions:
  - Musculoskeletal problems (back, knee, shoulder, neck, and other areas)
  - Rheumatological diseases (arthritis, lupus, and others)
  - Chronic headaches
  - Side-effects of drugs

### Eligibility Criteria
- Patients with chronic pain meeting the following definitions:
  - “Chronic pain is pain that continues for longer than 3 months, and is currently present. It may be due to a chronic condition, that has already been present for at least 6 months.”
  - “Age ≥ 18 years
- Exclusions:
  - Patients who were not able to communicate in English
  - Those with an inability to complete the required follow-up
  - Patients deemed to be inappropriate for participation by their physician

### Pain Flare Definitions Questionnaire
- A Pain Flare Definitions Questionnaire was administered at baseline
- Additional analyses of participants will be worthwhile to examine whether their perceptions are consistent with the single-source pain groups

### Pain Flare Definitions
- Patients appear to have severe disease and therefore are not representative of all patients with these conditions
- Analyses are limited by small Pain Source groups
- Study fails to capture patients with neuropathic pain, another important source of chronic non-cancer pain
- Additional analyses of patients with 2 or more sources of pain would be worthwhile to examine whether their perceptions are consistent with the single-source pain groups

## Results
### Demographics
- A subset of 151 patients completed the diary questionnaire (90% of enrolled, 93% of those who began the diary had ≥50% of entries in the diary week).

### Consent by Pain Source (n=151)
- Among the 151 patients eligible to enroll, both pain definitions were met by 17 (11%).
- 70% of patients had 2 or more pain definitions.
- 32 patients had a musculoskeletal pain definition, 27 patients had a rheumatological pain definition, 18 patients had a headache pain definition, 6 patients had a non-Sickle Cell pain definition, and 2 patients had a non-Sickle Cell, non-painful condition (n=8).

### Sources of Pain Among Patients with 2 or More Painful Conditions (n=70)*

### How Patients Defined a “Pain Flare” (n=154)
- Patients used the terms “Acute Pain Episode,” “Pain Flare,” and “Pain Crisis” interchangeably.

### Term Preferred to Describe a Pain Flare, by Pain Source (n=154)
- “Pain Flare” (44%)

### Definition of a “Pain Flare” By Pain Source (n=150)
- “A period of intense pain worse than your regular pain” (25%)
- “An intense pain worse than your controlled pain” (21%)

### Conclusions
- Participants did not prefer to use the term “Breakthrough Pain” when referring to a pain flare
  - They preferred the terms “Acute Pain Episode” and “Pain Crisis” or simply “Pain Flare”
- Chronic headache patients appeared to prefer the terms “Acute Pain Episode” or simply “Pain Flare”
- The concepts of “Sudden,” “Rapid,” and “Brief” appear to be important when defining a pain flare
- Results will be helpful to outcomes of additional pain and cognitive work with patients with these conditions

## Data
- A Pain Flares Definitions Questionnaire was administered at baseline
  - A short two-line instrument developed by United Briskus Corporation
  - Patients were asked to choose a term that best described a pain flare and definition of the term they selected
  - Pain scores were captured using a 10-point scale
  - 8 “No Pain,” 10.1 “Worst Pain Imaginable”

## Limitations
- Patients appear to have severe disease and therefore are not representative of all patients with these conditions
- Analyses are limited by small Pain Source groups
- Study fails to capture patients with neuropathic pain, another important source of chronic non-cancer pain
- Additional analyses of patients with 2 or more sources of pain would be worthwhile to examine whether their perceptions are consistent with the single-source pain groups

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- Results will not change the knowledge presented in the published literature because authors who analyzed the data were blinded to those who administered the Pain Flares Definitions Questionnaire

## References