Public Perception of Pain and Pain Management

Results of a Survey Conducted for the American Chronic Pain Association

July 9, 2002
Methodology

- Telephone survey of 1,000 adult Americans conducted June 27-30, 2002.
- Results are representative of and projectable to the US adult population.
Highlight Findings

- Pain and doctor visits
  - More Americans incorrectly think the number one reason for going to the doctor is for treatment of a cold or the flu, followed by treatment of pain (which is the correct answer).

- Pain and disability
  - More Americans correctly cited pain as the number one cause of disability in this country than any other cause.
Highlight Findings

- Some Americans live with ongoing pain and more think pain is a normal part of some illnesses and injuries.
  - One-third live with ongoing pain
  - 42% agree that pain is a normal part of some illnesses and injuries

- Most think the typical profile of someone living with pain is an adult over the age 65 or older.

- A majority agree that some people tend to exaggerate their pain to avoid work, get medication or get attention.

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Highlight Findings

- Respondents are quite confident that their primary care physician is knowledgeable enough to diagnose and treat their pain.

- However they are also concerned about the possibility of patients becoming addicted to strong medicines if they are used to treat pain.
I. The Role of Pain in Causing Doctor Visits and Disability
Why People Go to the Doctor

- One-third of Americans (35%) think that the number one reason people go to the doctor is for the cold or flu. Pain (27%) is the next most commonly cited reason for a doctor visit, followed by injury (17%) and checkups (16%).
Why People Go to the Doctor

-- Demographic Analysis

- More young Americans (18-44 years old) cited cold or flu (42%) than those aged 65 or older (15%) as the number one reason people go to the doctor.

- Those in the North Central states (38%) or the West (40%) are also more likely than those in the South (30%) to think cold or the flu is the number one reason for a doctor visit.

- Those with lower household incomes (less than $15,000, 24%) and lower levels of education (less than a high school degree 15%) are the least likely to think that cold or flu is the number one cause of a doctor visit. Respondents with incomes of $50,000 or more (42%) or those with a college degree (40%) are most likely.
Number One Reason for Going to the Doctor

- Cold or flu: 35%
- Pain: 27%
- Injury: 17%
- Check up: 16%
Number One Cause of Disability

- Chronic pain is the most commonly cited cause of disability in the US by 36% of the respondents.
- Fewer think heart attack (24%), cancer (19%) or stroke (16%) is the number one cause of disability in this country.
What Causes Disability in US?

-- Demographic Analysis

- Men are more likely than women to say that chronic pain is the number one cause of disability in this country (40% vs. 32%).
- Respondents between the ages of 25 and 34 are the most likely (42%) to cite pain as a source of disability compared to those aged 65 or over (25%).
- Residents in the West (47%) or North Central (38%) states are more likely to mention chronic pain in response to this question than respondents in other parts of the country.
What Causes Disability in US?
-- Demographic Analysis

- Respondents with the highest levels of household income ($50,000 or more, 46%), and those with the highest levels of education (college graduate, 47%) are much more likely than those with less than $15,000 a year in household income (19%) or less than a high school education (16%) to think that chronic pain is the number one cause of disability in America.
Number One Cause of Disability in US

- Chronic pain: 36%
- Heart attack: 24%
- Cancer: 19%
- Stroke: 16%
II. Living With Pain
Living With Ongoing Pain

- One-third of the respondents (34%) said they currently live with ongoing pain.
  - Those living with ongoing pain tend to be over 65 (49%); and have lower incomes or less education.
# Living With Ongoing Pain – Demographic Analysis

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<thead>
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<table>
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<tr>
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<td>College graduate</td>
<td>26%</td>
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A Profile of Those in Pain

- Most respondents think the typical profile of someone who lives with ongoing pain is:
  - An adult aged 65 or over (43%)
  - An adult aged 25-64 (30%)

- Practically no respondents think the typical profile of a person living in pain is a teenager or young child (1%).
A Tendency to Exaggerate Pain

- A substantial majority of respondents agreed that some people have the tendency to exaggerate their pain to:
  - Get attention (86%)
  - Avoid work (84%)
  - Get pain killers (83%)
- The youngest respondents are much more likely to think people exaggerate pain to avoid work (91%) or get pain killers (90%) than are those aged 65 or over (80% and 78% respectively).
Is Pain Something You Just Have to Live With?

- Americans are uncertain if pain is just a normal part of some injuries and illnesses that cannot be treated. About half of the respondents disagreed with this statement (48%) while a similar proportion (42%) agreed.
Living With Pain -- Demographic Analysis

- Respondents with lower levels of household income and less education are much more likely to think pain is something that cannot be treated than are those with higher levels of education or income.
## Living With Ongoing Pain – Demographic Analysis

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III. Treating and Diagnosing Pain
Most Think Their Doctor Can Diagnose and Treat Pain

- Respondents are quite confident that their primary care physician has the knowledge to diagnose (79%) and treat (83%) pain problems.
Diagnosing and Treating Pain

Do you feel your primary care physician has the knowledge to **diagnose** pain problems?

- Yes: 79%
- No: 16%
- Don't know: 5%

Do you feel your primary care physician has the knowledge to **treat** pain problems?

- Yes: 83%
- No: 13%
- Don't know: 5%

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The Possibility of Addiction

- Most respondents (78%) think there is a very (29%) or somewhat (49%) likely possibility that treating pain with strong medicine will result in the patient becoming addicted.

- Just one in five think addiction is not too or not at all likely if pain is treated with strong medicine.
Likelihood of Addiction if Pain is Treated With Strong Medicine

- Very: 29%
- Somewhat: 49%
- Not too: 17%
- Not at all: 3%
- Don't know: 2%

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