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| Title | Methods of Treating Chronic Pain. A Systematic Review |
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Aim

This report presents the results of a systematic review of the scientific literature on methods for treating chronic pain. The review proceeded from the following questions:

- What methods are effective for treating patients with chronic pain?
- What is it like to live with chronic pain, and how does it affect day-to-day living?
- What health economic considerations are involved in treating patients with chronic pain?

Conclusions and results

The report concludes that effective treatment methods are available. However, the effect is often moderate, and symptoms reappear when treatment is discontinued. Scientific evidence supports multidisciplinary rehabilitation programs for chronic pain of musculoskeletal origin. Physical activity/training under the guidance of, eg, a physiotherapist, is also effective. Combination with cognitive and/or behavioral therapies will further enhance the effect. For neuropathic pain, there is evidence for the use of anticonvulsants, potent opioids, and topical capsaicin. Pharmacotherapy is often accompanied by negative side effects.

The societal costs of chronic pain are high. Some evidence suggests that multidisciplinary rehabilitation and physical activity/training are cost effective. However, further research is needed.

Recommendations

No recommendations.

Methods

Literature searches were performed in MEDLINE, the Cochrane Library, Cinahl, and PsychInfo. The report is a systematic review of randomized controlled trials on the effects and cost effectiveness of methods used in treating chronic pain conditions. Observational studies were also

considered in assessing side effects and complications from treatment. Qualitative research was assessed regarding patients' experience of living with chronic pain. A chapter on ethical considerations is included.

Further research/reviews required

Areas identified as particularly important for future research include:

- long-term effects of chronic pain therapies
- impact of pain therapies on cost effectiveness and quality of life
- role of the patient in treatment
- potential value of tailoring special rehabilitation measures to specific groups of patients
- significance of the care setting as regards patient experiences, treatment outcomes, and the health economic considerations involved.