

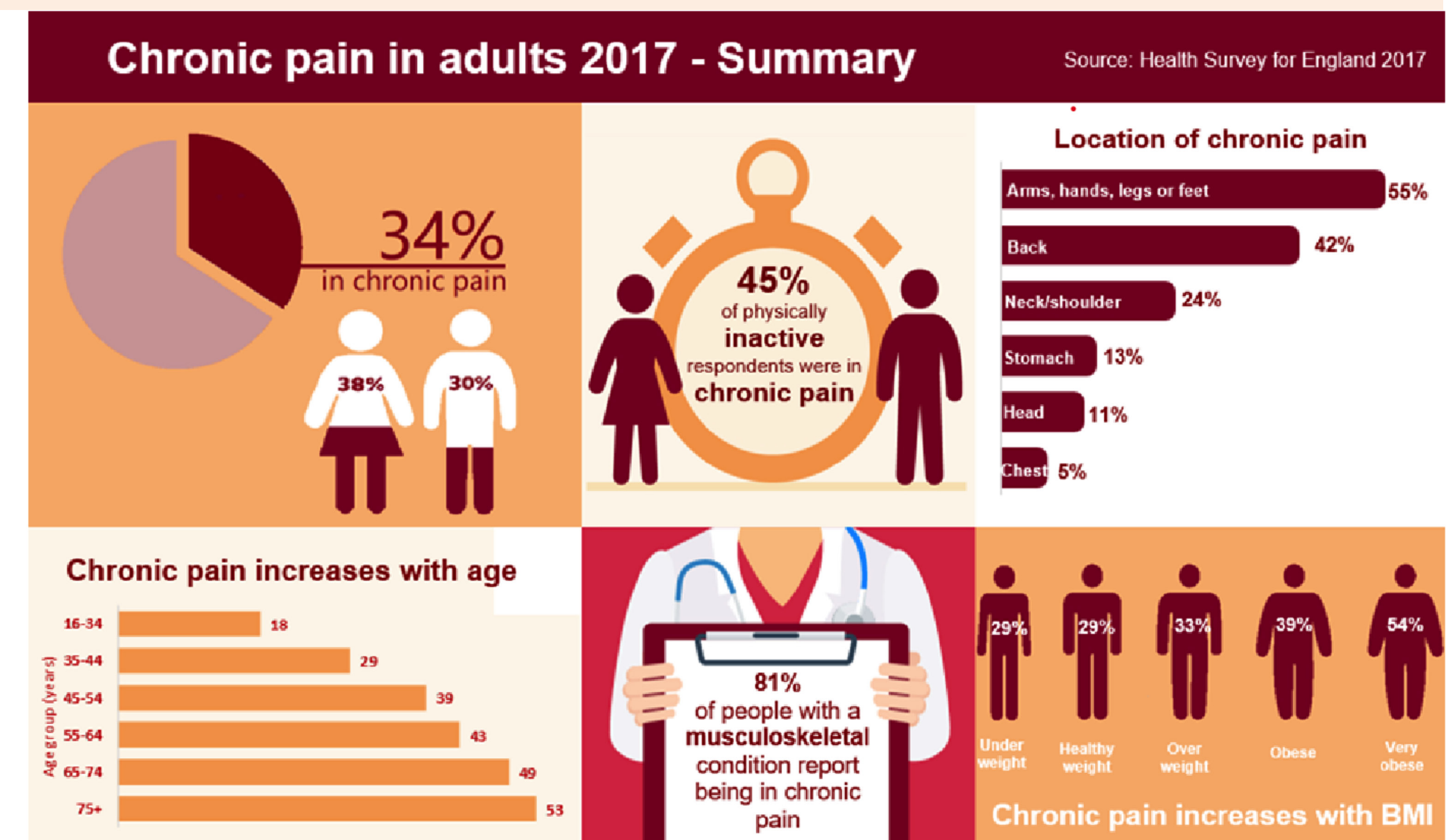
Moving from "Painkillers" to Pain Management: Practice-based Occupational Therapists improve patient outcomes and reduce need for GP appointments

Authors: Kieran Dinwoodie, Calderside Medical Practice NHS Lanarkshire and GP Advisor for Chronic Pain, Modernising Patient Pathways Programme, Centre for Sustainable Development, NHS Scotland - kieran.dinwoodie@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk
 Anne Sanderson, Advanced Occupational Therapy Practitioner, NHS Lanarkshire - anne.sanderson@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk

Aims & Objectives

Chronic pain is a public health issue, present in around 1 in 5 GP consultations. People with chronic pain consult their GP 5 times more than those without¹. These consultations are often unsatisfying for both clinicians and patients. NICE 2021 chronic pain guidelines have emphasised the limits of analgesics, whilst promoting holistic management².

Since 2020 several GP practices in NHS Lanarkshire have had occupational therapists (OTs) join the practice team to support people living with long term conditions such as pain. This is the first time chronic pain outcome data has been collated from GPs and OTs working together.



Content presentation

This is a retrospective review of patients living with chronic pain, across 7 GP practices, who received occupational therapy (OT) intervention. The effectiveness of the OT intervention was measured using the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM³), a validated outcome measure designed to capture a patient's self-perception of performance and satisfaction in everyday roles and activities. The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS⁴) was used to measure changes in mental health and wellbeing.

Total number of patient attendances to a GP were also evaluated. This was for anything (not just pain), and appointments were reviewed 6 months before and 6 months post-discharge from OT.

Relevance & Impact

A total of 112 patients attended occupational therapy. 65 patients (58%) had improved outcomes, including improved COPM and WEMWBS scores and quantifiable improvements for example, returning to work and reduction in medication.

Overall, GP attendances were lower by 156 appointments (22%) following OT intervention. Patients who demonstrated 'significant progress' had a 47% reduction in GP appointments.

Patients making significant/some/no progress:

Subgroups	Number of patients	GP appointments		% change
		Before	After	
No progress (40%)	47	316	302	-4%
Some progress (30%)	33	188	135	-28%
Significant progress (30%)	32	191	102	-47%
Total patients	112	695	539	-22%

Conclusions & Discussion

Having an MDT approach with occupational therapy improves outcomes in the majority of patients with chronic pain. This helps to improve function and participation in roles and responsibilities whilst also offering alternatives to analgesics which are often ineffective or harmful.

In the context of the current challenges in general practice recruitment and retention, having a wider MDT approach can promote general practice sustainability.

References

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4. University of Warwick and University of Edinburgh (2008) Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs> (accessed 15th August 2023).