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Results of Study: Chronic Pain and Emotional Health

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UBCO-OKB4 Health Lab Hello,

Thank you so much for taking the time to participate in the recent online study called, “Chronic Pain and Emotional Health.” We are contacting you because you indicated interest in learning about the results of the study.

Sample Characteristics

A total of 305 people participated in the study. Participant ages ranged from 18 to 89, with an average age of 55 years old. In terms of gender, 74% identified as female, 25% male, and 1% non binary. Respondents predominantly identified as white (92.8%), or Indigenous or Metis (6.7%). Around 30% of respondents were retired, while 25.6% were on medical leave or disability.

Key Results and Implications:

Results revealed that responses from others that discount the legitimacy of a person’s pain can significantly increase the risk of depression. In the current study, discounting and invalidating experiences were most commonly reported as coming from social services (e.g., insurance companies), followed by work colleagues. These findings emphasize the importance of improving societal understanding of chronic pain. Reducing invalidating social responses to chronic pain through public advocacy and education is a necessary goal to improve the mental and emotional health of those living with chronic pain.

Study results also showed that feelings of shame about one’s pain may play a key role in linking experiences of invalidation to depression among people with chronic pain. In other words, invalidating responses from others can increase feelings of shame, which in turn, increases risk of depression. This means it may be especially helpful to address feelings of shame about one’s pain in order to alleviate symptoms of depression. Importantly, shame and depression are very common among people living with chronic pain, but also treatable (see resources below).

Lastly, this study found that people who feel supported by their social networks are less likely to experience depressive symptoms when others discount their pain. Thus, enhancing supportive social connections appears to be another way to help protect against the harmful effects of invalidating social responses.

Resources:

· Pain BC offers information on chronic pain as well group-based support services: <https://www.painbc.ca>

· Bill Nelems Pain and Research Centre offers programs and group services to help

manage chronic pain and associated mental health concerns: <http://www.nelemspain.ca/services.html>

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- The UBCO interprofessional clinic provides brief and long-term therapy for a reduced rate. Referrals (including self-referrals) for the Walk-In Service or longer-term psychotherapy can be placed via telephone (250-807-8241) or email (ipc.ok@ubc.ca)
- Kelty's Key offers free online self-help courses for those struggling with chronic pain or mental health challenges: <https://www.keltyskey.com/courses/chronic-pain/>

