



ARTHRITIS HURTS

A study of how arthritis pain affects people living with arthritis in their everyday life

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BACKGROUND

Arthritis is the biggest cause of physical disability in the UK¹ affecting up to 10 million people², including 12,000 children³, and accounting for 30% of GP visits². It carries a huge economic as well as human and social cost, estimated at £7 billion annually in terms of lost labour in 2007⁴. It is the most common cause of chronic pain in the UK⁵ with pain being the most common symptom of living with arthritis⁶. An average of 85% of contacts to the Arthritis Care helpline are about pain⁷. Around 5,150 people per year received information about pain management via the helpline⁸.

PURPOSE

While we know pain affects the majority of people living with arthritis in the UK, Arthritis Care wanted to know more about how this pain affects them in their ability to carry out everyday activity in order to raise awareness of the issues facing people every day.

METHODS

An email was sent directly to 14,776 Arthritis Care supporters living with arthritis inviting them to take part in the survey. This online survey was also promoted from 24 March to 5 April 2010 to Arthritis Care supporters via the charity's website home page, social networking outlets and via its online discussion forum. A total of 2,263 surveys were analysed.

RESULTS

Out of the 2,263 responses collected, 78.7% were female and 89.3% of the participants were white British. 59.7% were aged between 45 and 64 years and 82% were of working age. The results of this survey showed that a majority of respondents are putting up with severe levels of pain on a regular basis. 56.7% stated they would not visit their GP or specialist about pain until it was 'often unbearable and frequently stops me doing daily activities'. 77% of participants stated their arthritis pain prevents them from sleeping through the night. 57% stated their everyday arthritis pain caused them difficulties coping at work (table 1).

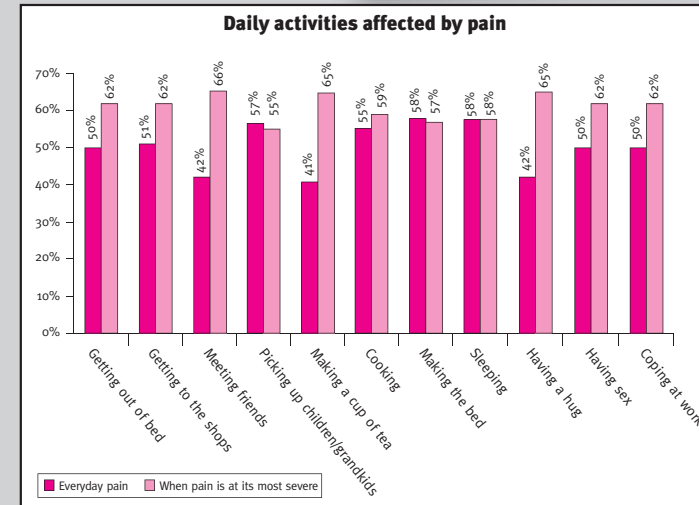
TABLE 1

Does your everyday or most severe pain cause you difficulty with any of the following?	Everyday pain	Most severe pain
Getting out of bed	50%	62%
Getting to the shops	51%	62%
Making a cup of tea	41%	65%
Cooking	55%	59%
Making the bed	58%	57%
Sleeping	58%	58%
Having a hug	42%	65%
Having sex	49%	63%
Coping at work	57%	58%

We asked the participants about how arthritis pain affects their lives. A large amount had difficulty carrying out the simplest but important daily activities. 58% said that pain affects their ability to sleep (graph 1).



GRAPH 1



A high percentage of respondents had problems looking after the house (63.6%) and over 70% stated their arthritis pain prevents them from being able to do gardening (table 2 and graph 2).

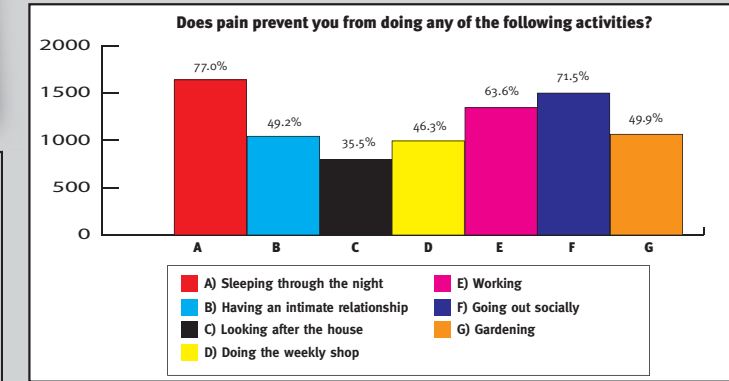


TABLE 2

Does pain prevent you from doing any of the following activities? (Please tick all that apply)	Count	Percentage
Sleeping through the night	1,609	77.0%
Working	1,028	49.2%
Having an intimate relationship	741	35.5%
Going out socially	967	46.3%
Looking after the house	1,328	63.6%
Gardening	1,494	71.5%
Doing the weekly shop	1,043	49.9%
Other	238	11.4%
TOTAL	2,263	100%

There were variations between the countries, England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales although the trends were the same.

GRAPH 2



'I feel exhausted, down, forgotten, guilty, missing out on life.'

'Some days putting my feet on the ground takes a lot of courage as I know the pain in my feet will be unbearable.'



CONCLUSIONS

These figures indicate that people have to endure significant limitations in everyday life due to unmanaged pain. Greater awareness of arthritis and the importance of seeking proper medical attention would lead to earlier interventions and, therefore, mitigate this situation.

¹ In 5: The prevalence and impact of arthritis in the UK. Arthritis Care (2002)
² Musculoskeletal Services Framework. Department of Health England (2006)
³ Silman AJ, Hochberg MC, Epidemiology of the Rheumatic diseases. 2nd Ed. Oxford Medical Publications (2001)
⁴ Fit For Work: Musculoskeletal disorders and Labour Market Participation. The Work Foundation (2007)
⁵ Pain in Europe: A report. [SQ12 & Q1]. NFO World Group/Mundipharma International Ltd (2003-2008)
⁶ OA Nation Report: 2004. p693 Q16, TNS/Arthritis Care (2003)
⁷ Data from Helplines Pro database, Arthritis Care (2009)
⁸ The Pain Files: Arthritis Care Helplines data 2009. Arthritis Care (2009)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work has been supported by an educational grant from MSD, by way of the secondment of A K Gilbert, researcher and employee of MSD.