

Experiences of pain-relieving drugs in individuals with spinal cord injury and neuropathic pain - a qualitative study

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Conclusion

There is a great need for more efficacious drugs without intolerable (cognitive) side-effects. Until then, improved pain management including competence and structure in pain management could improve the informants' situation and possibly compliance to current drugs. The use of peers and offering alternatives to drugs were also warranted by the informants.

Background & Aim

Neuropathic pain (NP) is primarily managed pharmacologically and optimal pain relief is rarely accomplished.

This study aimed to explore patient's expectations, experiences and desires with drugs prescribed for spinal cord injury (SCI) NP.

Informants

Eighteen participants with SCI and NP were interviewed in 4 focus groups and data were analyzed using content analysis with constant comparison.

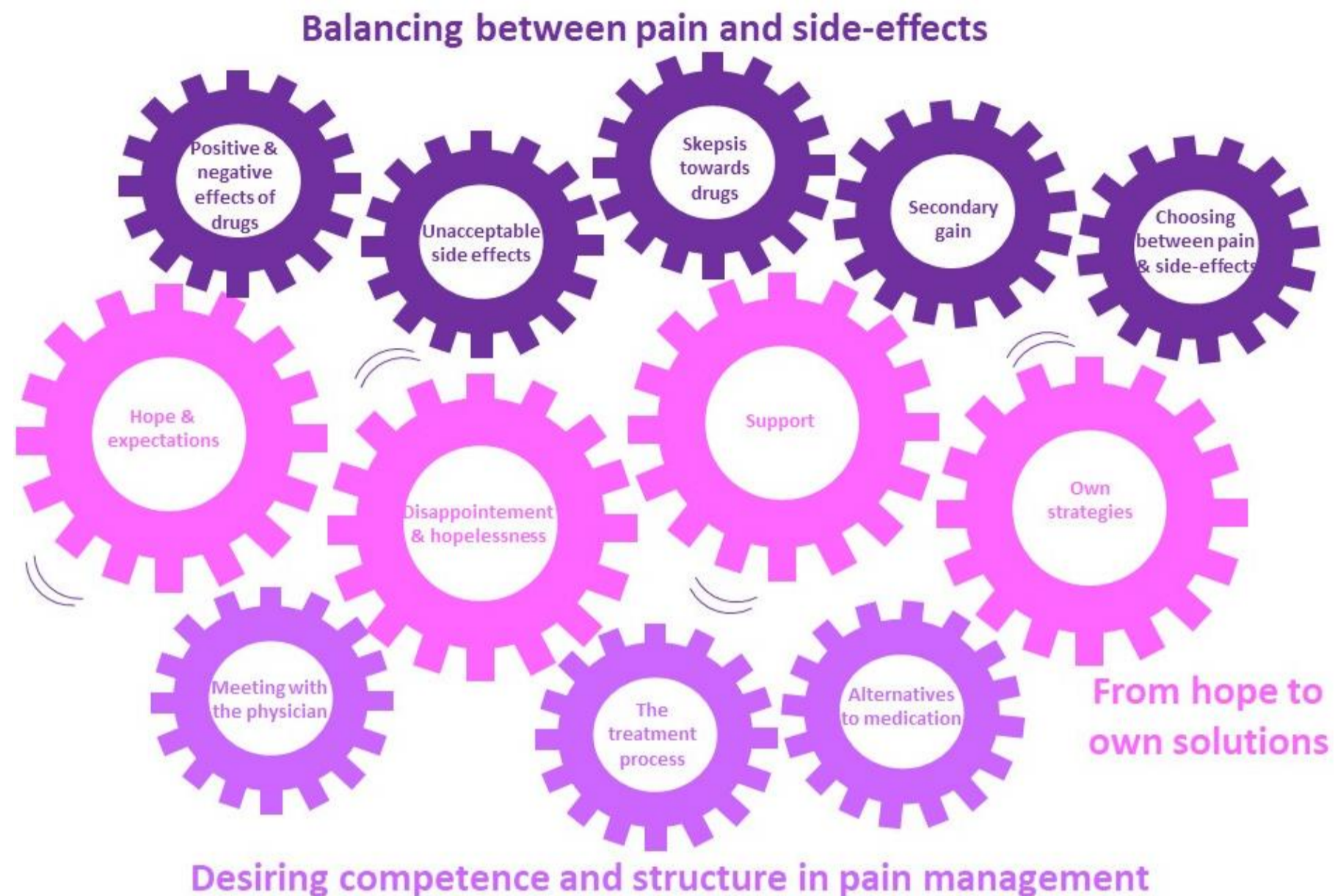
- 13 ♂/5 ♀
- Md age – 57 years
- Md time since injury – 8 years
- Md time with NP – 5 years
- Md pain intensity during last week – 7 on a 0-10 NRS
- 15 used prescribed drugs for SCI NP
 - 10 – antiepileptic drugs
 - 8 – antidepressants
 - 5 – opioids
 - 1 – cannabinoid
 - 1 – lidocain

Results

Preliminary results were initially categorized into 17 categories, thereafter merged into 12 and finally into three main categories; *Balancing between pain and side-effects*, *Desiring competence and structure in pain management* and *From hope to own solutions*.

This model describes the journey from hope of complete pain relief to the development of own strategies affected by both drug-related and health care related experiences.

The final model together with quotations illustrating the three main categories.



Balancing between pain and side-effects

"...that's the problem, isn't it, you get so damn strong drugs...and turn into a zombie the whole day...you exist but you are not alive in a way..."

From hope to own solutions

"I have oxycodone...that is, if things gets too rough I can take one...it is in the drawer... I get to throw packages due to that they get out of date, but like damned it is nice to have it.... I can cope with higher levels of pain without feeling bad when I know that I've got it...."

Desiring competence and structure in pain management

"I experience that....when you come to the physicians, they think this is urkomplicerat och jättejobbigt and they don't want a dialogue.... I just wanted to come to someone who had a little knowledge about this and asked the right questions and guided me.....I've been quite alone there....."

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