

Abstract:

Managing chronic pain and the wellbeing of those suffering from it has become a major issue in the UK. This short presentation aims to explore the ways in which chronic pain can impact an individual's wellbeing. Wellbeing is defined as the care of both mind and body, with an emphasis of living in line with one's inner values, allowing for the presentation to be centred within a eudemonic framework.

Biology, psychology and economics were selected as the three disciplines to examine the ways in which chronic pain can lead to poor wellbeing. This exploration highlighted the multifaceted ways that chronic pain can negatively impact day-to-day life. Biological functions in the body are typically disrupted. Psychologically, the continuous nature of the pain can lead to an increase of external stress and lowered mood. From an economic standpoint, financial strain from lack of access to aid/care and lowered work can comprise one's wellbeing. The findings of this project suggest however, that a more multi-disciplinary approach to care could be implemented in the UK to help build up the wellbeing of individuals with chronic pain and to have better outcomes overall.

Commentary (351 words excluding in-text citation):

According to a meta-analysis conducted by Fayaz et al. (2016), around 28 million people are currently suffering from some form of chronic pain. With the prevalence / nature of the conditions, the impact on wellbeing is significant. Chronic pain is defined as "pain that persists or recurs for longer than three months" (Kang et al., 2023) with research going into understanding the biological mechanics of pain within the body and how humans perceive pain (Leake et al., 2022) (Meyr & Saffran, 2008). The International Association for the Study

of pain has generated a taxonomy to categorise different types of pain (Raja et al., 2020). There are currently three categories: Nociceptive pain (Minhas & Clauw, 2021), neuropathic pain (King et al., 2016) and nociplastic pain (Aydede & Shriver, 2018). Although chronic pain can be caused by any of the three categories, the introduction of the nociplastic definition helps to explain conditions that are idiopathic, such as fibromyalgia.

Pain on a biological level causes disruption within the body which leads onto understanding how chronic pain impact wellbeing from a psychological lens. The ‘Pain cycle’, developed from a biopsychosocial standpoint, highlights the different areas pain can affect such as social life, stress and being less active. The ‘5 a day to wellbeing’ developed the New Economic Foundation (2008) introduced steps one can take to improving wellbeing. However, if an individual finds themselves stuck in this pain cycle, it will prove difficult to follow the guideline.

Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) is an evidence-based approach that aids an individual to be psychologically flexible and live in line with their core values (Harris, 2019). The Hexaflex model illustrates the points one must be able to cultivate to have good wellbeing. With chronic pain, one would find themselves on opposing points on the model, i.e. focusing on the past/future rather than the present. Chronic pain is also a source economic pressure for both the individual and government. The most pressing issue is the lack of access to Personal Independent Pay. This is caused by the rigid criteria that doesn’t consider the fluctuating nature of having chronic pain (GOV.UK, 2024).

The exploration of the three disciplines and how they interlink emphasises the need for multi-disciplinary care. Research done by Ma et al. (2023), found that making resources more

accessible and having MDT-like input leads to better outcomes for patients. Additionally, wellbeing is currently being improved for people living in the UK through self-guided books. An example is “*Overcoming Chronic Pain*” (Cole et al., 2020), which helps to give the individual a sense of control over their wellbeing and pain through evidence-based and clinically proven approaches (NHS, 2026).

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