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COGNITIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY (CBT) SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY IN CHRONIC PAIN PATIENTS

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy is a helpful CBT intervention that improves outcomes in patients attending a rheumatology pain rehabilitation programme

Madrid, Spain, 15 June 2017: The results of a study presented today at the Annual European Congress of Rheumatology (EULAR) 2017 has shown that Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, a form of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) that focuses on psychological flexibility and behaviour change, provided a significant reduction in self-reported depression and anxiety among patients participating in a pain rehabilitation programme.¹

This treatment also resulted in significant increases in self-efficacy, activity engagement and pain acceptance.¹

To assess the potential benefits of an 8-week programme of group Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) in people with persistent pain, measures of pain acceptance and activity engagement were taken using the Chronic Pain Acceptance Questionnaire. Measures of psychological distress using the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale and self-efficacy were also taken at assessment, on the final day of the programme, and at the follow up six-month review.¹

For those chronic pain patients with scores at all three time points, there were statistically significant improvements in all parameters between baseline and at six-months follow-up, including the change in mean score of depression, anxiety, self-efficacy, activity engagement and pain willingness ($p < 0.001$).

“To further validate the role of ACT in the treatment of chronic pain, specifically in a rheumatology context, a randomised controlled clinical trial that includes measures of physical and social functioning within a Rheumatology service would be desirable,” said lead author Dr. Noirin Nealon Lennox from Ulster University in Northern Ireland.



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ACT is a form of CBT that includes a specific therapeutic process referred to as "psychological flexibility". ACT focuses on behaviour change consistent with patients' core values rather than targeting symptom reduction alone. Evidence for this approach to the treatment of chronic pain has been mounting since the mid 2000's.² A previous systematic review had concluded that ACT is efficacious for enhancing physical function and decreasing distress among adults with chronic pain attending a pain rehabilitation programme.²

In this study, patients were referred into the ACT programme by three consultant rheumatologists over a five-year period. Over one hundred patients' outcome measures were available for a retrospective analysis.

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-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS:

For further information on this study, or to request an interview with the study lead, please do not hesitate to contact the EULAR congress Press Office in the Goya Room at the IFEMA, Madrid during EULAR 2017 or on:

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About Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Diseases

Rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) are a diverse group of diseases that commonly affect the joints, but can also affect the muscles, other tissues and internal organs. There are more than 200 different RMDs, affecting both children and adults. They are usually caused by problems of the immune system, inflammation, infections or gradual deterioration of joints, muscle and bones. Many of these diseases are long term and worsen over time. They are typically painful and limit function. In severe cases, RMDs can result in significant disability, having a major impact on both quality of life and life expectancy.

About 'Don't Delay, Connect Today!'



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'Don't Delay, Connect Today!' is a EULAR initiative that unites the voices of its three pillars, patient (PARE) organisations, scientific member societies and health professional associations - as well as its international network - with the goal of highlighting the importance of early diagnosis and access to treatment. In Europe alone, over 120 million people are currently living with a rheumatic disease (RMD), with many cases undetected. The 'Don't Delay, Connect Today' campaign aims to highlight that early diagnosis of RMDs and access to treatment can prevent further damage, and also reduce the burden on individual life and society as a whole.

About EULAR

The European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR) is an umbrella organisation which represents scientific societies, health professional associations and organisations for people with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases throughout Europe. EULAR aims to reduce the burden of rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases on individuals and society and to improve the treatment, prevention and rehabilitation of rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases. To this end, EULAR fosters excellence in education and research in the field of rheumatology. It promotes the translation of research advances into daily care and fights for the recognition of the needs of people with musculoskeletal diseases by the governing bodies in Europe through advocacy action.

To find out more about the activities of EULAR, visit: www.eular.org

References

¹ Nealon Lennox N, O'Neill S, Hannigan A. Acceptance and commitment therapy: a retrospective study of outcomes from a hospital-based, group, pain rehabilitation programme in rheumatology services in the South-East of Ireland. EULAR 2017; Madrid: Abstract OP0140HPR

² Hann KEJ, McCracken LM. A systematic review of randomised controlled trials of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for adults with chronic pain: Outcome domains, design quality, and efficacy. *Journal of Contextual Behavioural Science* 2014; 3: 217-222