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SEVERITY, INTERFERENCE, AND QUALITIES OF CANCER-RELATED PAIN: DESCRIPTIVE CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY OF LIVED EXPERIENCES OF CANCER PATIENTS

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Introduction

Cancer pain is complex, often mixed with varying presentations. Pain is a highly subjective feeling resulting from the intricate interaction of bio-psycho-social aspects of the individual. Perceived pain interferes with physical and psychosocial well-being. Lived experiences of cancer patients are influenced by the severity, interference, and quality of pain.

Objective

The study aims to describe the proportion of severity, interference, and quality of cancer-related pain among patients in Sri Lanka.

Methods

A descriptive cross-sectional study (n=384) was conducted at Apeksha Hospital, Maharagama. Patients over 18 years who experienced cancer pain for three months or more, related to the primary lesion, secondary lesions, radiation, or chemotherapy were eligible. The pain due to non-cancerous sources that lasted for less than three months was excluded. The validated Sinhala version of the Short Form Brief Pain Inventory and the Short Form McGill Pain Questionaire-2 were used to collect data after obtaining the approval of the Ethics Review Committee.

Results

The means of the worst and average pain scores were 7.97 (± 1.94) and 4.63 (± 1.57), respectively. Among the participants, n = 281 (73.2%; CI- 68.5- 77.3) reported their worst pain as severe, and n=173 (45.1%; CI- 40.1-50.0) reported their average pain as moderate. Pain severely interfered with their normal work (n= 240, 62.5%) and sleep (n= 224, 58.3%). While more than 35% reported severe interferences with their general activity, mood, walking ability, and enjoyment of life. Among the qualities of pain, the highest proportion experienced aching pain, (n=330, 85.9%) while the least proportion felt sharp pain, (n= 51, 13.3%).

Conclusions

The lived experiences of cancer pain are diverse and significantly impact the well-being of cancer patients in Sri Lanka. The 'worst pain' experience of the majority was severe, and the

pain severely influenced their 'normal works' and 'sleep'. Recommends giving due consideration to lived experiences when planning treatment.

Keywords: *the lived experience of cancer pain, pain severity, pain interference, qualities of pain*

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Table 1: Proportions of pain severity and interference among participants (N=384)

Pain severity and interference items	Mean	SD	No pain		Mild (1-4) on NRS		Moderate (5-6) on NRS		Severe (7-10) on NRS	
			No	Proportion (%) (95% CI)	No	Proportion (%) (95% CI)	No	Proportion (%) (95% CI)	No	Proportion (%) (95% CI)
Worst pain	7.97	1.94	0	0	18	4.7 (2.9-7.2)	85	22.1 (18.2-26.5)	281	73.2 (68.5- 77.3)
Least pain	0.72	1.31	266	69.3 (64.4- 73.6)	110	28.6 (24.3-33.3)	5	1.3 (0.5- 3.0)	3	0.8 (0.2- 2.2)
Average Pain	4.63	1.57	0	0	170	44.3 (39.3-49.2)	173	45.1 (40.1-50.0)	41	10.7 (7.9- 14.1)
Pain now	2.53	2.32	107	27.9 (23.6- 32.5)	204	53.1 (48.1- 58.0)	13	3.3 (1.9-5.7)	30	7.8 (5.5-10.9)
Own general activity	4.83	3.26	58	15.1 (11.8- 19.0)	113	29.4 (25.0-34.1)	62	16.1 (12.8- 20.1)	**151**	**39.3 (34.5-44.2)**
Mood	5.64	2.55	5	1.3 (0.5- 3.0)	127	33.1 (28.5- 37.9)	99	25.8 (21.6-30.3)	**153**	**39.8 (35.0- 44.8)**
Walking ability	4.76	3.59	84	21.9 (18.0-26.2)	91	23.7 (19.7-28.2)	66	17.2 (13.7-21.2)	**143**	**37.2 (32.5-42.1)**
Normal works	6.78	2.86	12	3.1 (1.8- 5.3)	75	19.5 (15.8-23.7)	57	14.8 (11.6-18.7)	**240**	**62.5 (57.5-67.2)**
Relationships with others	3.71	2.54	43	11.2 (8.4-14.7)	**222**	**57.8 (52.8-62.6)**	56	14.6 (11.4-18.4)	63	16.4 (13.0-20.4)
Sleep	6.01	3.42	47	12.2 (9.3-15.9)	75	19.5 (15.8-23.7)	38	9.9 (7.2-13.2)	**224**	**58.3 (53.3-63.1)**
Enjoyment of life	6.10	2.32	5	1.3 (0.5- 3.0)	86	22.4 (18.5-26.8)	112	29.2 (24.8-33.9)	**181**	**47.1 (42.2-52.1)**

*NRS- Numerical Rating Scale