



## **Despite pain treatment, one in three Irish patients still suffer from severe chronic pain**

- *88% of Irish patients say that their pain has impacted their quality of life*
- *One third of Irish patients report moderate or extreme anxiety or depression as a result of their pain*
- *Irish patients walking, sleeping and washing habits compromised because of pain*

**European Week Against Pain (20–25 October 2008), Dublin:** Despite treatment efforts, chronic pain management is still failing for a third (n = 27) of Irish patients suffering from severe chronic pain, with four out of five patients feeling moderately or extremely anxious or depressed as a result of their pain.

These are among the findings released today from the interim data from PainSTORY (**Pain Study Tracking Ongoing Responses for Year**), the first survey of its kind to provide in-depth insight into how chronic pain impacts the lives of patients over one year in 13 European countries. The survey is sponsored by an educational grant from Mundipharma International Limited.

The data released today provide a picture of patients' lives over the three months since the survey was initiated and shows that despite consultation with a healthcare professional and treatment, patients are still struggling with their pain, with a severe impact on their quality of life. Results show that nine out of ten chronic pain patients are taking prescription medication, a third of whom reported that the pain they experienced has either stayed the same or deteriorated in the period since the study was commenced.

'Chronic pain continues to have a significant impact on patient's quality of life. It highlights the need for pain to be managed within a multidisciplinary framework which addresses both the patients physical and psychological needs,' said Dr Brona Fullen, President Irish Pain Society. 'Resources for the management of pain are needed to increase the number of multidisciplinary pain clinics and programmes nationwide'.

Since their initial interview three months ago, 33% of patients in the Irish cohort suggested that their worst level of pain had intensified since their initial consultation, 19% had progressed from moderate to severe pain, and 4% reported a progression from mild to moderate pain within the three month period.

PainSTORY shows that both the physical and psychological aspects of patients' lives are affected by their pain. For example almost half of patients in Ireland now walk and sleep less, or need help with these activities (60% and 39% respectively). A minority also wash less because of their pain (14%). The data suggests that Irish patients are more likely to reduce the extent to which they do the activity than ask for help. The influence of pain also extends into patients' working lives, and almost half have changed the way they work.

Today's data show patients are being prescribed suboptimal treatment for their pain. Of the 89% of Irish patients in moderate-severe pain on prescription medication, only 4 percent were prescribed strong opioids. More than a third of patients were suffering at least one side effect as a result of their prescribed medication, including constipation, dizziness and drowsiness, which are common symptoms for both weak and strong opioids.

"Side effects are affecting these patients. Patients are finding themselves in situations where they need to choose between using pain relief medications, or compromising their pain management by not taking medications to avoid the burden of side effects," stated Professor Erdine from the World Institute of Pain. "We are interested to see the next wave of results for PainSTORY. There has already been some interesting issues that have been brought to light. This survey demonstrates the pressing need for improved management of pain across Europe."

Interim results and additional information are also available from [www.painstory.org](http://www.painstory.org).

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**Notes to editors**  
**About the survey**

PainSTORY (**Pain Study Tracking Ongoing Responses for a Year**) is the first study of its kind to track patients with chronic pain for a year, providing a picture of the lives of people living in pain, and the management of pain in 13 European countries.

Baseline results from the study show that chronic pain has a significant impact on the daily lives of patients. The survey aims to better understand the management of chronic pain across Europe.

The PainSTORY survey is being conducted by an independent research company, IPSOS, in collaboration with the following independent third parties:

- European Federation of IASP Chapters
- World Institute of Pain
- Arthritis and Rheumatism International
- OPEN Minds

The survey is sponsored by a restricted educational grant from Mundipharma International Limited.

### **Methodology**

PainSTORY recruited patients suffering from non-malignant (osteoarthritis, back pain / lower back pain, osteoporosis, neuropathic pain, mixed pain, other long term pain), moderate to severe (rate 5–10 on a pain scale) chronic pain (i.e. lasting for more than three months). Respondents are studied for 12 months. The research is being carried out in 13 countries across Europe: United Kingdom, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Ireland, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Norway by an independent research company, IPSOS.

The study consists of four waves of qualitative interviews between April 2008 and March 2009. Interim engagement activities between the four waves are sent to patients to provide additional insight, such as diaries and lifebooks. Comparisons between baseline data and subsequent wave results will show how the impact of pain and pain management changes over the course of a year.

### **About the European Week Against Pain**

The European Week Against Pain (EWAP) which takes place annually, was started as part of the European Federation of IASP Chapters' (EFIC's), Europe Against Pain Initiative, in October 2001. EWAP aims to create more awareness of pain as a major healthcare problem amongst the general public, healthcare workers and healthcare policy makers.

The theme of this year's EWAP is fibromyalgia, a widespread musculoskeletal pain and fatigue disorder that occurs predominately in women. Unexplained widespread pain occurs in about 10% of the general adult population in Western countries, with approximately half of those affected meeting American College of Rheumatology (ACR) classification criteria for fibromyalgia.

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*The PainSTORY survey was sponsored by a restricted educational grant from Mundipharma International Ltd, Cambridge, England*