

Chronic Pain

Introduction

Chronic pain is defined as pain that lasts for 3 months or longer¹. It is one of the most common reasons for seeing a Primary Care clinician, with a prevalence of around 20-34% of the population.^{2,3,4} Women, and people living in deprived areas, are disproportionately affected and the prevalence increases with age³. The financial impact of chronic pain is significant in the UK, with a high NHS 'spend' cost on analgesic drugs being only part of the costs to the economy⁵.

These are often complex patients and regularly lead to unsatisfying consultations for both clinicians and patients. Having a structured assessment, and engagement of the patient in a therapeutic alliance based on their own goals, helps build effective pain management plans. Expert guidance emphasises the importance of non-pharmacological measures and a patient-centred approach to the management of chronic pain, while recognising both the benefits and potential harms of medication¹.

Module aims:

This module covers the initial assessment and ongoing management of chronic pain in Primary Care, including:

- How to make a diagnosis of chronic pain
- Differential diagnosis of primary and secondary chronic pain
- Discussing self-management of chronic pain with patients
- Non-pharmacological interventions and the evidence supporting their use
- Minimising harm when prescribing opiates in chronic pain
- Prescribing and deprescribing drugs for chronic pain
- Medical cannabis in chronic pain