

# Impact of Pain on Maltese Citizens – A Cross sectional study about the burden of severe chronic pain in the Maltese population (VOPs 25/2017)

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**This project is being managed by  
Malta Health Network and No Pain Foundation  
as partners with the advice and collaboration of various  
advisors and experts chosen based on their professional  
expertise and on a personal basis.**

## Main aim

To conduct a cross-sectional study by telephone interview on a representative population of adults in Malta using validated tools in order to estimate the prevalence of pain in this population at a point in time.

## Objectives and priorities

- To obtain an indication of the extent of the impact of pain on Maltese citizens.
- To discern the frequency of diverse pain forms including chronic & severe pain.
- To profile the burden of pain among adult sufferers in Malta.
- To assess the subjective quality of pain care management from the patient's viewpoint.
- To combine a literature review on available policies for pain with the results obtained in this research to enable better advocacy for evidenced-based policies, to improve the quality of life for persons with chronic pain.

## Methods 1 - Collection of published data on pain

- 1) A background literature review will collect existing data about pain frequency and care policies from available resources - including local Maltese studies (Melitensia) at the University of Malta.
- 2) A further international literature review will explore other recent studies which looked at pain in it's different aspects eg use of pain medication, identification of diagnosis by ICD codes, impact on life

## Methodology (2)

A Quantitative study about the severity and the burden of pain will be collected in a cross-sectional study.

The representative sample size (based on a power calculation) will be invited to answer some questions through a telephone survey.

The tool of measurement for the quantitative telephone interviews will utilise a validated questionnaire SF-36v2 already back translated in Maltese

Interviews will be carried out over the phone with measures taken to ensure the sample is truly representative.

## Methodology (3)

Quantitative data on pain using the SF 36V will be collected.

This is a tool which has been used in other studies to give quantitative assessments of severe and frequent pain with health-related quality of life.

The validated measurement tool selected

The SF-36v2<sup>®</sup> Health Survey asks 36 questions to measure functional health and well-being from the patient's point of view.

It is a practical, reliable and valid measure of physical and mental health that can be completed in five to ten minutes.

It is a generic health survey because it can be used across age (18 and older), disease, and treatment group, as opposed to a disease-specific health survey, which focuses on a particular condition or disease.

([http://www.rand.org/health/surveys\\_tools/mos/36-item-short-form/survey-instrument.html](http://www.rand.org/health/surveys_tools/mos/36-item-short-form/survey-instrument.html) health-survey.html) The tool is freely available for use and is also available translated in Maltese .

The following tool was chosen as it is similar to that used in other European studies (similar to a survey in 5 European countries, Langley P et al. **The societal impact of pain in the European Union: health related quality of life and healthcare resource utilization.** *Journal of Medical Economics*, 2010; 13: 571-581) thus this will provide possibility of comparison of Maltese data to other countries.

- Age and gender, socio-demographic variables, and points of access to health care
- experience of pain and impact on psycho-social aspects of person's life
- Severity and frequency of pain, chronification of pain
- Use of healthcare resources (e.g. doctor visits, emergency room visits, hospitalisations)

## Results, analysis and dissemination

The results from the quantitative research will be analysed and summarised using statistical methods.

Results from the population in Malta will be compared with published data from European surveys using such tools.

The results will be presented to the local media, relevant entities such as Civil Society, Unions and Employers representative entities and Government in general. Opportunities for publishing data on local and European fora will be sought.

## Results, analysis and dissemination

Pain is often linked to health. However, it is envisaged that data will help to sustain the assumption that Maltese patients are no different to those from other countries and pain has a psycho-social impact on peoples' lives.

It can lead to social isolation, exclusion, employment problems and poverty.

This data can lead to adequately provide the basis for planning of services, policies and other actions necessary to be developed and in place for people with chronic pain..

## Results, analysis and dissemination

This could be the beginning of inter and intra-organisational and Government collaboration to meet the needs of patients suffering from chronic and sever pain.

For the first time, systematic data about the burden of pain in Malta will be collected and evaluated in a systematic research.

## Results, analysis and dissemination

This will not only help policy makers and other decision makers (e.g payer or hospital manager) but also healthcare provider and caregiver to improve pain care and to use limited healthcare resources in an efficient way in Malta.

The data will serve as a status quo and changes in pain care should be followed up in further investigations to continuously improve the situation of patients suffering from chronic and severe pain.

## Results, analysis and dissemination

Results will be shared between the entities, presented to the Government and to the general public so as to stimulate the necessary actions and policies to be in place to make life of people with pain better.

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