



ARTHRITIS CARE

*Empowering
people with arthritis.*

ARTHRITIS HURTS

The hidden pain of arthritis

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present document is the most comprehensive survey to date of people with all forms of arthritis in the UK which looks at the effects of pain on everyday life.

The survey shows that arthritis-related pain causes significant difficulties for a large number of respondents and limits their ability to live life as fully as possible or to conduct many everyday activities.

77% of respondents said that pain prevents them sleeping through the night and nearly 50% said it prevents them from working. 63% said that they had difficulty having sex as a result of their pain, and nearly 58% said that they regularly hide their pain from those close to them.

Nearly all respondents, regardless of age, gender, nationality or type of arthritis, said that they lived with at least mild pain every day, with many describing their everyday pain as severe.

The results show that many people living in chronic pain wait a long time to see a health professional after the onset of symptoms – over 4 years on average - leading to a delay in diagnosis and treatment. This can result in the condition getting worse, and can lead, in turn, to an aggravation of the pain, deformities, increased operations and time off work. Greater awareness of arthritis and the importance of seeking prompt medical attention would lead to earlier interventions, and would therefore significantly mitigate this situation.

A greater number of people with osteoarthritis (OA) said that they experienced pain every day than people with rheumatoid arthritis (RA). This may be attributable in part to the greater effectiveness of currently available treatment for RA in particular, but it also suggests that people with RA are more closely monitored than people with OA.

A large number of respondents rated the information and support they received from Arthritis Care very highly, suggesting that there is significant value in health professionals signposting their patients to additional support from trusted, quality assured providers of information, including charities such as Arthritis Care.

Arthritis Care calls on governments across the UK to promote greater awareness that people experiencing chronic or recurring pain should visit a health professional without undue delay. Arthritis Care also calls on health professionals to be especially alert to symptoms of arthritis-related pain in their patients and to signpost patients to Arthritis Care and other voluntary organisations for additional information and support, including information on how they can better self-manage.