**Level 1 and Level 3 Research Award Report**

**Dr Martin Rabey**

# **Project: Societal beliefs about pain may be more balanced than previously thought. Results of the Guernsey pain survey**

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**Acknowledgement:**

Many thanks to the MACP for these two Research Awards which made this project possible and accessible.

Thank you to Prof. Lorimer Moseley, University of South Australia, for his assistance with the development of the questionnaire.

**Background:**

This project was the beginning of a larger idea: a public health campaign about pain and pain care. To develop this idea, we proposed several phases of research, the first was to gain insight into the public’s broader knowledge, understanding and beliefs regarding musculoskeletal pain per se (as opposed to regarding a specific condition such as low back pain).

At the time of development of this project plan two of the authors (MR / NM) of the paper were practising in Guernsey. We believed that Guernsey would make an ideal jurisdiction for such a project as a small, contained, Westernised community where it would be easy recruit and / or target a high proportion of the public through multimedia advertising. Unfortunately, for several reasons this project stalled after the first phase. However, the resulting publication offered interesting insights knowledge, understanding and beliefs regarding musculoskeletal pain at a societal level.

**Level 1 Research Award**

The beginning of the project was the development of a questionnaire through which to survey the public on the island. Following this we developed a custom website through Wix ([www.wix.com](http://www.wix.com)) with a link to the questionnaire on Survey Monkey ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)). Multimedia advertising used for participant recruitment included adverts through Facebook targeting participants fitting our inclusion criteria, directing them to the custom website. The Level 1 Research award that we were awarded allowed us to cover the costs of using Survey Monkey for the required period / number of participants and to pay for some Facebook advertising.

Questionnaire domains captured included:

1) Demographics: age, gender, educational level

2) Pain experience

3) Work absenteeism

4) Understanding of pain and pain management: including questions from the Revised Neurophysiology of Pain Questionnaire and Avoidance-Endurance Questionnaire

5) Multidimensional influences on pain

6) Physical activity and pain

7) Pain Catastrophising Scale

8) Healthcare decision-making

Data were collected between January 2019 and February 2020. In total up to 2.71% of Guernsey’s public participated (n=1656).

Participants responses to statements were examined using a semi-quantitative approach modelled on direct content analysis. Data were analysed for the entire cohort, and then independently, based upon participants’ responses to a question asking whether they had current musculoskeletal pain or not. Comparisons between those with and without pain were examined.

Utilisation of this approach was helpful to uncover that the public had a more nuanced understanding of pain than was expected. Clinicians should consider that even if patients appear to have some biomedical beliefs, our findings suggest that patients may be open to considering broader multidimensional influences on their pain. Patients are likely to be open to therapeutic exercise, but need guidance about what is appropriate / safe. Clinicians should not assume patients want certain treatments (e.g. manual therapy) and illuminate the need to utilise a shared decision-making process considering an individual’s beliefs, preferences and expectations to deliver targeted (self)-management that addresses their specific needs and priorities. The results do highlight the need to facilitate the public’s contemporary multidimensional understanding of pain, including pain self-care together, with greater knowledge regarding realistic prognoses/recurrences and evidence-based reduction of recurrences also needed.

To facilitate comparison with other jurisdictions Guernsey sociodemographic data are outlined in the studies additional file.

**Level 3 Research Award**

Because this research was undertaken within a small island community the authors were very keen to publish the final manuscript open access, to allow dissemination across the island. Therefore, we applied for, and were successful in being awarded an MACP Level 3 Research award to cover the costs of the publication fee when publishing open access. Rejected from Pain Reports, our second choice of journal was BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders, where this manuscript was accepted. We are thankful to the reviewers at this journal for their feedback on the manuscript as the changes they recommended made the paper more readable. I had never published open access before, and apart from some technical issues around the payment coming from the MACP rather than the authors, this was a relatively smooth process. Thank you to Katie and Collette at the MACP for their assistance with sorting out the open access fee payment. Without this award we would have published this manuscript behind a paywall, which would have meant that the public and other healthcare colleagues in Guernsey would not have been able to access these findings easily.

**Reach:**

We submitted this research for presentation at the New Zealand Pain Society Annual Scientific Meeting, however, our application was unsuccessful. Strangely, within a few days of publication (January 2024) I was contacted by a researcher at the University of Otago in New Zealand’s South Island about using the questionnaire that we had developed. The Guernsey Evening Press (Guernsey’s local newspaper, which reaches approximately 75% of the island’s households) have also published a story on this research. This research will be woven into a presentation that I am giving in July at IFOMPT 2024 in Basel.

**Open Access Manuscript:**

For anyone wishing to read the full manuscript please click on the link below:

[Societal beliefs about pain may be more balanced than previously thought. Results of the Guernsey pain survey | BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders | Full Text (biomedcentral.com)](https://bmcmusculoskeletdisord.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12891-023-07088-0)

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