WORKSTYLE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AMONG PATIENTS WITH CHRONIC PAIN AND RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

Danielle Rice, Masters in Clinical Psychology
Lawson Health Research Institute
Student/Trainee

INTRODUCTION / AIM
An adverse workstyle can involve failing to take breaks, high personal work expectations and ignoring symptoms to continue working. A measure of workstyle was developed by Feurstein et al., which considers how people adjust and respond to pain in the work environment. Based on this measure, an adverse workstyle has been linked to increased pain, functional limitations and decreased overall health, yet, the relationship between workstyle and mental health has not been well studied. The current study sought to 1) compare workstyle scores between patients diagnosed with chronic pain (CP) to those with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and 2) determine if workstyle and psychological distress are related.

METHODS
229 CP and 226 RA participants were recruited from specialist clinics in Ontario. Demographics, pain variables and the self-report Workstyle measure and Depression Anxiety Stress Short Form were collected. ANCOVA and linear regression analyses were conducted while controlling for age, gender and average pain intensity.

RESULTS
Participants with CP reported a more adverse workstyle through higher scores on the Workstyle measure compared to those with RA \([F (4, 417)=9.71, p<0.005]\), suggesting that CP patients are at a greater risk of exacerbating pain due to their workstyle. However, among the full sample of patients, workstyle was not significantly related to psychological distress (change in \(R^2=0.005\), \(p=0.245\)).

DISCUSSION / CONCLUSIONS
Our findings suggest that patients with CP may more often try to work through pain rather than adjust to it as compared to patients with RA. This type of workstyle has been associated to pain, health and functioning, however, after controlling for demographic variables and average pain intensity, patients’ workstyle did not significantly relate to increased psychological distress.

OTHER AUTHORS
Swati Mehta
Allan Shapiro
Keith Sequeira

Robert Teasell