CURRENT STATE OF REPORTING PAIN OUTCOMES IN COCHRANE REVIEWS OF CHRONIC MUSCULOSKELETAL PAIN CONDITIONS

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INTRODUCTION / AIM

To assess the current state of reporting of pain outcomes in Cochrane reviews on chronic musculoskeletal painful conditions and to elicit opinions of patients, healthcare practitioners, and methodologists on presenting pain outcomes to patients, clinicians, and policymakers.

METHODS

We identified all reviews in the Cochrane Library of chronic musculoskeletal pain conditions from Cochrane review groups (Back, Musculoskeletal, and Pain, Palliative, and Supportive Care) that contained a summary of findings (SoF) table. We extracted data on reported pain domains and instruments and conducted a survey and interviews on considerations for SoF tables (e.g., pain domains, presentation of results).

RESULTS

Fifty-seven SoF tables in 133 Cochrane reviews were eligible. SoF tables reported pain in 56/57, with all presenting results for pain intensity (20 different outcome instruments), pain interference in 8 SoF tables (5 different outcome instruments), and pain frequency in 1 multiple domain instrument. Other domains like pain quality or pain affect were not reported. From the survey and interviews [response rate 80% (36/45)], we derived 4 themes for a future research agenda: pain domains, considerations for assessing truth, discrimination, and feasibility; clinically important thresholds for responder analyses and presenting results; and establishing hierarchies of outcome instruments.

DISCUSSION / CONCLUSIONS

There is a lack of standardization in the domains of pain selected and the manner that pain outcomes are reported in SoF tables, hampering efforts to synthesize evidence. Future research should focus on the themes identified, building partnerships to achieve consensus and develop guidance on best practices for reporting pain outcomes.

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