

RECOGNITION AT THE HEART OF THE COMPLEX SITUATIONS EXPERIENCED BY PEOPLE WITH CHRONIC NEUROMUSCULOSKELETAL PAIN

J. Mellier¹, A. Balis¹, F. Defraigne², Q. Vanderhofstadt³, L. Di Biagi⁴, M. Schetgen^{5,6}, P. D'ans², J. Foucart⁷, C. Mahieu^{8,6}, A. Bengoetxea¹

¹Université Libre de Bruxelles/ Osteopathy Sciences Research Unit, Brussels, Belgium, ²Haute Ecole Ilya Prigogine, Brussels, Belgium, ³Université Libre de Bruxelles/ Department of General Medicine, Brussels, Belgium, ⁴Université Libre de Bruxelles/ Research Center in Social Approaches to Health, Brussels, Belgium, ⁵Université Libre de Bruxelles/ Department of General Medicine, Brussels, Belgium, ⁶Université Libre de Bruxelles/ Primary Care Research Unit, Brussels, Belgium, ⁷Université Libre de Bruxelles/Research Unit in Psychology, Brussels, Belgium, ⁸Université Libre de Bruxelles/Research Center in Social Approaches to Health, Brussels, Belgium

Methods: A qualitative method was used by conducting 24 semi-structured interviews with people with PMSC in complex situations. The study was carried out in Belgium with French-speaking individuals. The interviews took place at the university, in a university hospital, in private clinics or in the persons' homes.

Results: People with CNMSP revealed the importance of the lack of recognition experienced in the intimate, social and legal spheres. The invisibility of pain and its a priori benign character, as well as the sacredness of medical images and the stigmatization of chronic pain, lead to questioning of the veracity of the person's experience by their entourage and health professionals. Pain causes a loss of physical, emotional and relational capacities, leading to isolation and psychological distress. A struggle to be legally recognized can occur, ranging from a denial of responsibility by employers to the brutality of certain «expert» doctors. Access to financial aid to support work incapacity or to gain access to some forms of care is thus jeopardized.

Conclusions: This study highlights that the lack of recognition is at the heart of the complex situations experienced by people with CNMSP. Given the fact that the invisibility of pain is an inherent characteristic of this medical condition, the lever to alleviate the negative consequences of non-recognition would be to evolve the vision of different actors involved as well as collaborative practices.