Access to pain clinics for persons with arthritis in Québec: a mixed-methods study protocol

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Background

- Arthritis is a major cause of disability in Canada and it causes a substantial burden for persons suffering from arthritis, their family and the society [1].
- Pain is the most frequent symptom reported by persons living with arthritis and can lead to multiple limitations of daily activities [2].
- Limited access to appropriate health services is one of the challenges to comprehensive pain management for persons with arthritis [3-5].

Objectives

To document access to pain clinics for persons with arthritis in Québec and identify targets for improvement based on their experiences.

Specific objectives:

1) describe the socio-demographic and clinical profile of persons with arthritis who consulted in pain clinics;
2) assess waiting times to access pain clinics and the impact of waiting time on clinical outcomes at 6 months;
3) identify socio-demographic and clinical factors associated with waiting time;
4) describe the utilization of health care services by persons with arthritis while waiting for services and
5) explore experiences and perceptions of persons with arthritis regarding access to pain management services and potential strategies to improve access.

Methods

STUDY DESIGN

- Mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative) design is well suited to study complex topics such as access to services [6].
- Conceptual foundations of this study is built upon Levesque et al.'s (2013) framework of patient-centred access to health care, which identifies health care system determinants and population determinants of access to health care [7].

PART 1: Quantitative (objectives 1-4)

- Analysis of data from the Québec Pain Registry: clinical and socio-demographic data of 9363 patients who consulted in pain clinics between 2007-2014.
- Patients with arthritis will be identified based on standardized diagnostic codes (e.g. osteoarthritis, rheumatoid and psoriatic arthritis).

Variables list

Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3	Objective 4
▪ Diagnostic ▪ Comorbidities ▪ Age, sex, education ▪ Pain characteristics ▪ Quality of life ▪ Etc.	▪ Waiting time (IV) ▪ Pain intensity (DV) ▪ Limitation of daily living (DV) ▪ Depression (DV) ▪ Confounders: obj. 1 variables	▪ Obj. 1 variables ▪ Waiting time (DV)	▪ Health professionals consulted prior to pain clinic admission

Statistical analyses

- Descriptive analysis (obj. 1)
- Bivariate and multivariate analyses (recursive partitioning, multiple linear regression) (obj. 2-3)
- Multiples correspondence analyses (obj. 4)

PART 2: Qualitative (objective 5)

Study population and recruitment

- 30 patients who consulted in pain clinics in the previous 6 months with a diagnostic of rheumatoid arthritis (n=10), osteoarthritis (n=10) and fibromyalgia (n=10).
- Invitations to participate will be posted in pain clinics.

Data collection

- Semi-structured interviews of 60-90 minutes.
- Interview questions based on results from the quantitative study.
- Question topics: access and use of pain management services, impact of waiting time, targets for improvement, etc.
- Interview guide will be pretested with 3 to 5 patients.

Analyses

- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed verbatim.
- Data will be coded using NVivo software and analyzed using qualitative content analysis.

Expected results

- This project will provide essential knowledge on the current state of **access to pain clinics for persons with arthritis**, as well as an in-depth understanding of patients' experiences of accessing care.
- Results will help identify **gaps in services** and potential **targets for action** to ensure timely access to pain management services for persons with arthritis.

References

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