



WHICH FACTORS INFLUENCE CHRONIC PAIN MANAGEMENT?

A best worst scaling experiment with final year medical students and General Practitioners

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Chronic pain education is an essential determinant for optimal chronic pain management. Given that attitudes and preferences are involved in making treatment decisions, identifying which factors are most influential to final year medical students' and General Practitioners' (GPs) chronic pain management choices is of importance. The main aim of this study was thus to explore what factors influence chronic pain management. Furthermore, by comparing final year medical students and GPs in Sweden, we investigated how these influential factors change over time, and possible differences between final year medical students in Sweden and Australia.

Method: An online survey in four parts* where a Case 1 best worst scaling experiment (BWS) was employed.

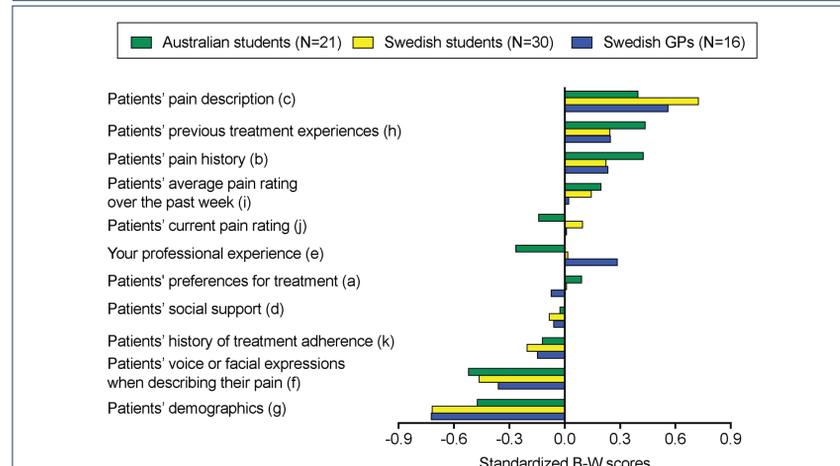
In best worst experiments, respondents are set to choose the best and the worst alternative within a set of alternatives in a hypothetical situation. In this case choosing chronic pain treatment for a new chronic pain patient that was presented in a clinical vignette.

Example of a best worst scaling choice set from survey. Imagine that you will chose treatment for John. Amongst these factors, select which one is the most important and least important by ticking the boxes"

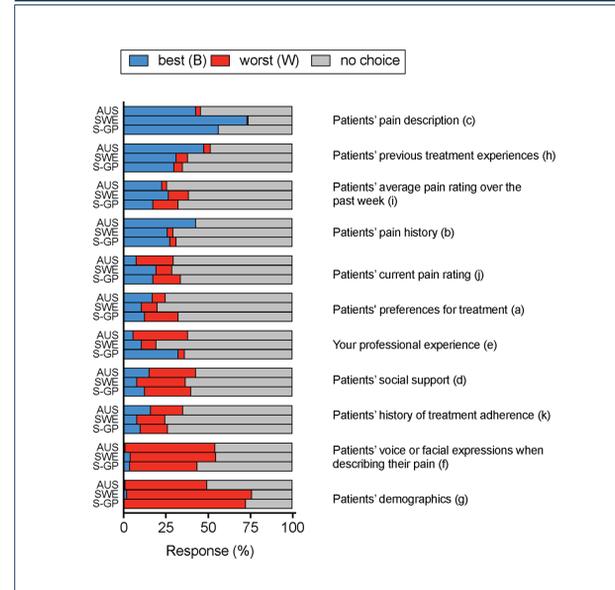
	Most important	Least important
Patients' pain description	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Patients' voice or facial expressions when describing their pain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Patients' demographics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Patients' history of treatment adherence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Your professional experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Results: Patients' pain description ("c") was the most important factor to both Swedish students and Swedish GPs while the Australian students considered both this factor and patients' previous treatment experience ("h") being the most important. Patients' voice or facial expressions when describing their pain ("f") and patients' demographics ("g") were clearly chosen as worst the most on an aggregate level by all cohorts.

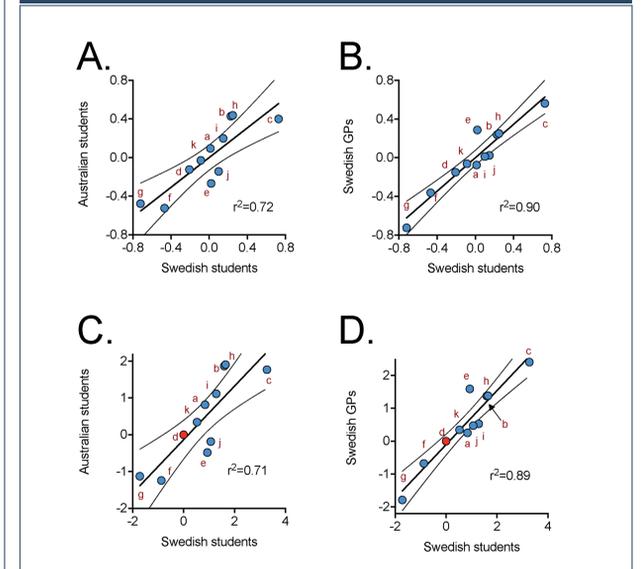
Standardized best-worst (B-W) scores for the for the Swedish and Australian students and the Swedish GPs. The items have been ordered from highest to lowest best minus worst scores for the Swedish student cohort.



Best, worst and no choice responses (as % of the total response rate) for the Swedish (SWE) and Australian (AUS) students and the Swedish GPs (S-GP). The items have been ordered from highest to lowest best scores for the Swedish student cohort.



Correlation between the A, B: mean standardized B-W scores and C, D, the exp logit coefficients for the Swedish students (N=30) vs. either the Australian students (N=21; A,C) or the Swedish GPs (N=16; B,D). The dotted lines show the 95% confidence bands for the regression line.



Conclusions: Students and GPs favour typical pain assessment factors when choosing pain treatment for a new chronic pain patient. Australian students show less confidence in their own professional experience, which can be explained by differences in their education, as the Swedish students encounter more patients during their undergraduate training. Besides factor "e", we observe a remarkably similar ranking of factors between Swedish students and GPs, implying that their strategies for chronic pain management do not change with gained experience. These results underline the need for thorough and appropriate undergraduate education to accurately address the complexity of chronic pain management and improve treatment outcomes.

*For details of the remaining survey sections see Rankin et al. (Scand J Pain 18 [2018] 533-44), where the findings of other sections including the Health Care Providers' Pain and Impairment Relationship scale (HC-PAIRS) and open end questions are reported in detail for the medical students.