

AB110. 4. Patient-rated physician empathy: does it contribute to patient satisfaction during pain clinic consultations?

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Background: Patient satisfaction plays a significant role in adherence to treatment and contributes to a positive working patient-physician therapeutic relationship—fundamental components in the context of chronic pain management. The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between patient-rated physician empathy and patient satisfaction after a single new pain clinic consultation. To date no research has been conducted to examine the relationship between physician empathy and patient satisfaction in the setting of chronic pain clinics.

Methods: Institutional ethical approval was granted for this

study. Patients attending a chronic pain clinic for the first time were invited to complete a questionnaire comprising a brief socio-demographic survey, the Consultation and Relational Empathy (CARE) measure and an overall satisfaction rating.

Results: The sample, N=140 patients were balanced for gender, 80% of participants ranged in age from 30–70. Of these patients, 80.7% had been living with chronic pain from between 1 and 5 years. The data were deemed non-parametric and a Spearman's Ranked Order Correlation Analysis yielded a strong positive correlation between patient-rated physician empathy and patient consultation satisfaction $\rho = 0.734$, $n=140$, $P<0.000$.

Conclusions: Patient-rated physician empathy was strongly correlated with patient satisfaction. As such this research supports the growing body of literature highlighting the importance of promoting and developing educational programs for physicians and medical trainees to enhance empathic communication skills within the clinical setting.

Keywords: Empathy; communication; patient satisfaction; pain clinic

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