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## Quantifying the impact of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) on chronic pain services in the Republic of Ireland

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**Background:** During the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, most medical services were shut down and resources were redistributed. Closures included pain management departments where many staff were redeployed. The aim of this study was to assess the impact of COVID-19 on chronic pain services in the Republic of Ireland.

**Methods:** An online survey was sent to pain consultants working in all public hospitals in the Republic of Ireland between the 22-28th September 2020.

**Results:** We received responses from 18 consultants from all 15 public hospitals in the Republic of Ireland with chronic pain services. Procedural volume during lockdown fell to 26% of pre-COVID levels. This had recovered somewhat by the time of the survey to 71%. Similarly, in-person outpatient clinic volume fell to 10% of pre-COVID numbers, and recovered to 50%. On average, 39% of public hospital activity was made up for by the availability of private hospitals. This varied significantly across the country. The use of telemedicine increased significantly during the pandemic. Before COVID, on average 13% of

outpatient clinic volume was composed of telephone or video consultations. This increased to 46% at the time of the survey.

**Conclusions:** This survey of consultant pain physicians in the Republic of Ireland has revealed how chronic pain services have been affected during the pandemic and how they have evolved.

**Keywords:** Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19); chronic pain; telemedicine; waiting lists; outpatients

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### Footnote

*Conflicts of Interest:* The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

*Ethical Statement:* The authors are accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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