

CHRONIC PAIN – A GLOBAL CONCERN

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Chronic pain is common – but isn't sexy. People who through no fault of their own have their lives demolished by pain deserve our help. Professor Henry McQuay from Oxford clearly highlights the plight of chronic pain sufferers in his article in the BMJ 2008, "Help and hope at the bottom of the pile".¹

A detailed reference in the Chief Medical Officer's report the same year also highlighted the importance and impact of chronic pain on the society. The report aimed to raise awareness to the fact that patients with chronic pain are underserved and there is a need for medical attention to the field of chronic pain.²

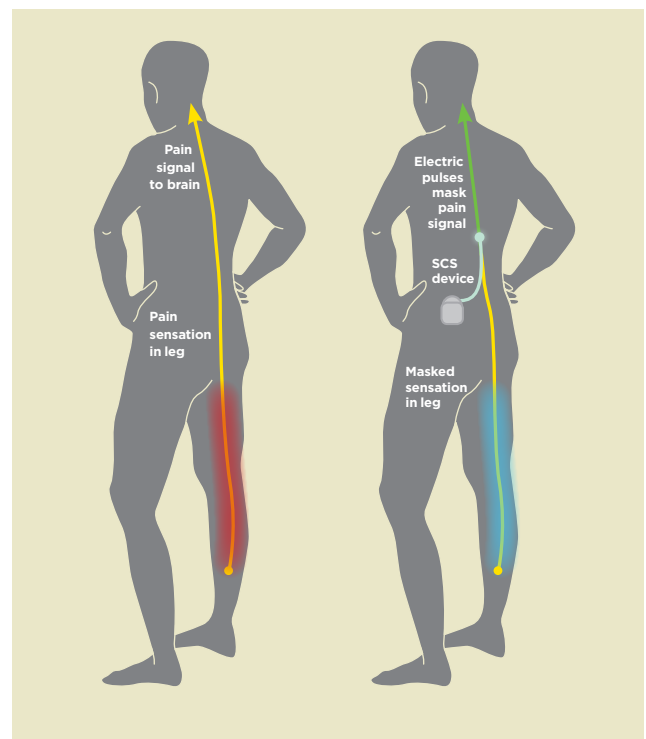
Chronic Pain is a serious problem globally with significant socio-demographic, economic and health related concerns. Estimates suggest that **20% of adults suffer from pain globally** and 10% are newly diagnosed with chronic pain each year. By 2030, the WHO predicts that the four leading contributors of global burden of disease, chronic pain is an important co-morbidity associated with these.³

The economic impact of pain is greater than most other health conditions due to effects on rates of absenteeism, reduced levels of productivity and increased risk of leaving the labour market.⁴ A US study showed lost productivity amounting to **\$61/£32.34 billion per year due to chronic pain**,⁴ while a UK report confirmed £3.8 billion cost of management of adolescent pain alone.²

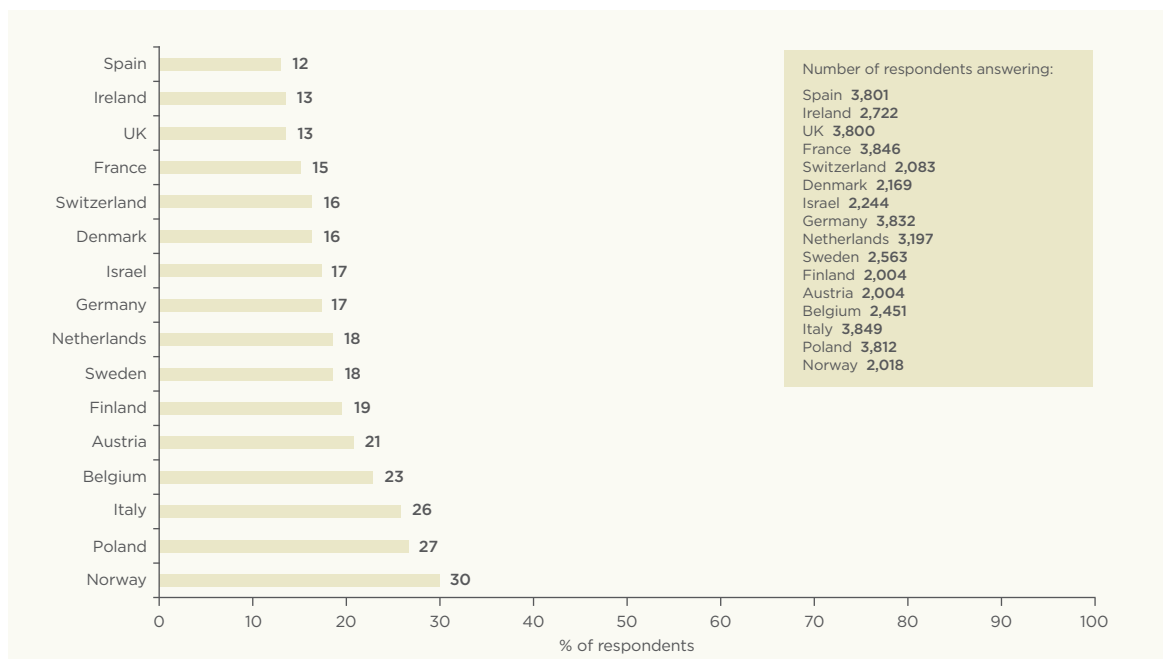
Technological advances over the years have assisted in management of severe chronic pain states including **Failed Back Surgery Syndrome (FBSS)** and **Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS)** as outlined in NICE tag 0159 through the use of implanted devices such as spinal cord stimulators.

Spinal cord stimulators are devices implanted in the epidural space. They send electrical impulses to the spinal cord thereby altering transmission of pain messages sent to the brain and modify sensations in the area of pain, to be felt as a tingling sensation. SCS does not eliminate the source of pain but simply changes the perception of pain in the painful area by altering transmission of signals to the brain.

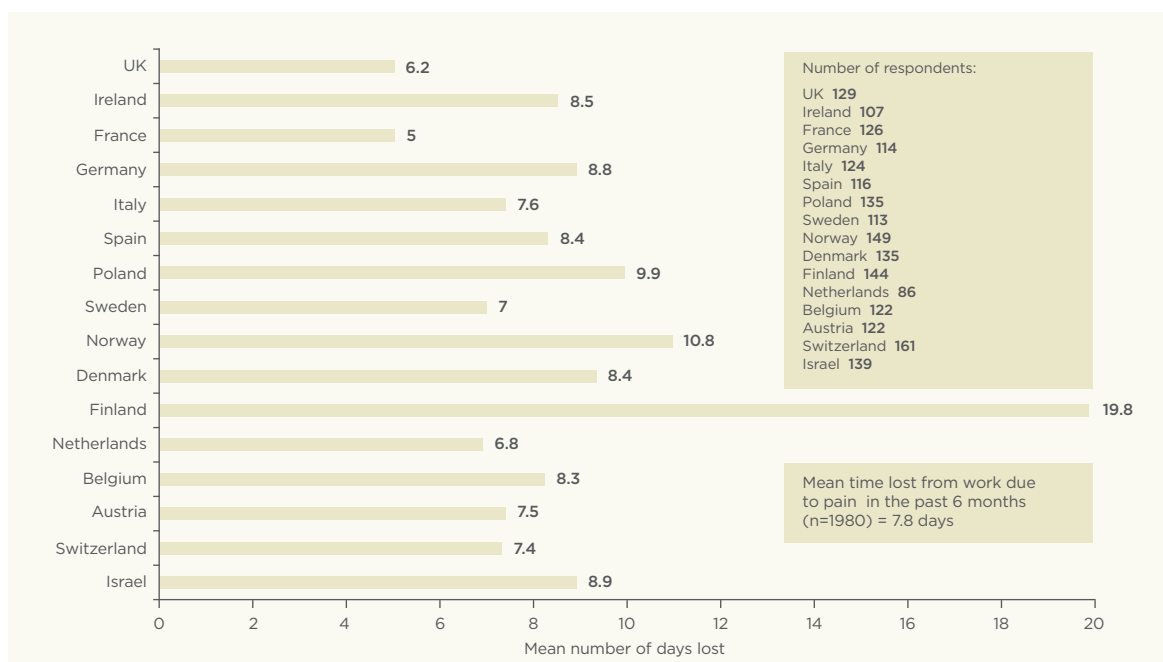
In patients who have persistent **neuropathic back and leg pain** despite adequate corrective surgical management and anatomical stability, spinal cord stimulators have been beneficial in improving quality of life (QoL). A recent cost effectiveness and cost utility study⁸ demonstrated clinically and statistically significant increase in both clinical outcomes and QoL, 24 months after SCS implantation. The most important changes were found within the first six months of SCS treatment, and then maintained or slightly improved during the following period.⁸



Prevalence of chronic pain in Europe from a survey of 46,394 individuals across 15 European countries⁵



Mean time lost from work⁵



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