

OUTCOME EVALUATION OF PAIN BC'S STRATEGIC AREAS

Prepared by Catalyst Research Group | October 2014

Background

Chronic pain is a major public health issue for Canadians. The disease places a significant burden on affected individuals, the health care system and nation's economy. Pain BC is a non-profit organization that aims to address this burden of pain through engagement, education, systems change and knowledge translation in British Columbia. Since the organization's inception in 2008, Pain BC has focused on achieving the following three strategies:

- * educating, promoting skill development, and building hope and confidence among people in pain and their families;
- * education, promoting skill development, and building hope and confidence among health care providers;
- * and facilitating the development and implementation of innovation and improvements in the health care system.

While Pain BC has received anecdotal feedback that their programming is effective, the organization requires concrete evidence to assess their progress and whether outcomes are being achieved. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the extent to which Pain BC's strategies have been attained, and what differences their strategies have made.

Pain BC aims to reduce the burden of pain through education, engagement, systems change and knowledge translation

Methods

Evaluation data were gathered from the following main sources.

- * An online survey to explore outcomes associated with involvement in Pain BC's programs. A total of 155 responses were gathered from people living with pain (PLWP) (n = 129), family and friends (n = 5), and health care providers (HCPs) (n = 21).
- * Qualitative, semi-structured interviews with a sample of key informants to explore Pain BC's contribution to innovation and improvement in the health care system (n = 10). Respondents included: executive directors of related non-profit organizations (n = 2), physicians who are pain specialists (n = 2), representatives from Doctors of BC (n = 2) and the BC health authorities (n = 4).
- * Analysis of previously collected, program-specific evaluation feedback (e.g. Pain BC webinar evaluation feedback, annual conference evaluation feedback, etc.)
- * Reach and engagement levels of Pain BC's online media

Thank you to all those who shared their valuable feedback with us!

Key Findings: People Living With Pain (PLWP)

Strategic Area #1: Educating, promoting skill development, and building hope and confidence among people in pain and their families

Is Pain BC addressing the needs of PLWP?

The majority of PLWP who participated in the online survey either agreed (50%; n = 60) or strongly agreed (35%; n = 42) that Pain BC is addressing their needs as a person with pain. Most of the respondents who disagreed explained that they are seeking more opportunities for direct contact and interaction with programs and other PLWP.

85%
of PLWP agreed that
their needs are being
met by Pain BC

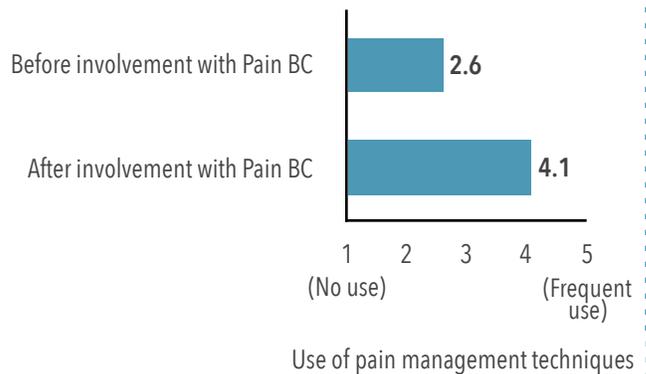
What are outcomes for PLWP?

Findings from the online survey demonstrate that Pain BC has made a substantial positive impact on the following outcomes for PLWP:

- general knowledge about chronic pain
- knowledge of pain management techniques and tools, including alternative therapies
- use of pain management techniques (see Figure 1)
- ability and confidence to manage their pain
- feeling empowered to be the driver of their health and well-being
- sense of connectedness/belonging and reduced isolated in dealing with chronic pain
- referrals to health care providers who specialize in pain

The above findings were corroborated by Pain BC's previously collected, program-specific evaluation feedback targeting PLWP.

Figure 1. PLWP's use of pain management techniques before and after their involvement with Pain BC (n = 108)



“The resources have helped me to better understand my relationship with pain and how to control it so that it doesn't control my life.”

Have PLWP been engaged in the design, delivery or evaluation of Pain BC's programs?

When survey respondents were asked if they have been engaged in the design, delivery or evaluation of Pain BC's programs or services, only 12% (n = 15) reported that have been engaged, whereas 88% (n = 106) have not. Those engaged explained that they have provided feedback on programs and services, assisted with the delivery of past events, and were engaged as advisory group members.

How can Pain BC improve?

Survey respondents provided a range of suggestions for improvement, including:

- ✳ extend the reach of programs and services across BC, including rural areas
- ✳ continue to lobby for change within the health care system to better serve PLWP
- ✳ facilitate peer support groups to reduce impacts of isolation
- ✳ continue to work with HCPs to increase increase understanding, increase availability of specialists and reduce stigma

Key Findings: Friends and Family Members

Strategic Area #1: Educating, promoting skill development, and building hope and confidence among people in pain and their families

Is Pain BC addressing the needs of family and friends?

Most of the friends and family members who participated in the online survey either *agreed* (n = 2) or *strongly agreed* (n = 1) that Pain BC is addressing their needs as a person with pain. The remaining respondents (n = 2) indicated that this survey question was not applicable to them.

“They provided an understanding of pain and how it affects a human being...tools to help alleviate or diminish pain.”

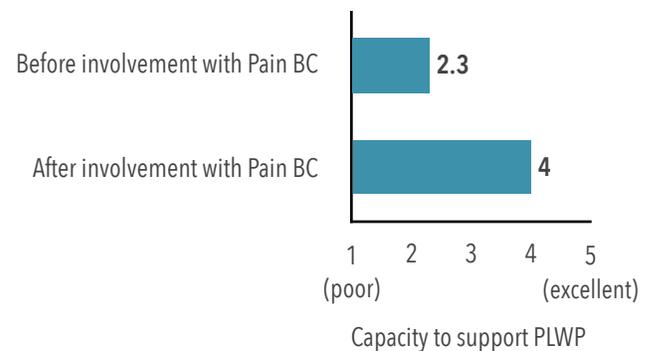
What are outcomes of participation for family and friends?

Findings from the online survey demonstrated that Pain BC has positively improved the following outcomes for friends and family members:

- general knowledge about chronic pain
- awareness of pain management tools
- capacity to support PLWP (see Figure 2)

“They provide an understanding of pain and how it affects a human being. It gives people a variety of tools to use to help alleviate or diminish pain...”

Figure 2. Friends and family members' capacity to support PLWP before and after their involvement with Pain BC (n = 4)



How can Pain BC improve?

Findings from the online survey demonstrated that Pain BC has positively improved the following outcomes for friends and family members:

- ✳ consider facilitating peer support programs for PLWP to reduce isolation
- ✳ raise awareness about the organization's programs since some in need are not aware of them
- ✳ adjust aspects of the delivery of the programs that are in place (e.g. enhance the sound of speakers' voices at events, make sure that Twitter feed does not recycle content, etc.)

“The Twitter feed seems to recycle content quite frequently.”

“Pain BC needs to offer peer support programs...we have seen people enter such programs with depression, anger...after a few weeks, they are able to cope with their situation more effectively.”

Key Findings: Health Care Providers (HCPs)

Strategic Area #2: Education, promoting skill development, and building hope and confidence among health care providers

Is Pain BC addressing the needs of HCPs?

The majority of HCPs who participated in the online survey either *agreed* (67%; n = 14) or *strongly agreed* (14%; n = 3) that Pain BC is addressing their needs. Of the small number of respondents who disagreed (19%; n = 4), some provided feedback on how to better meet their needs as HCPs, such as extending the reach of educational opportunities to rural and remote areas in BC and advocating for an improved referral process for PLWP to access pain specialists.

81%
of HCPs agreed that
their needs are being
met by Pain BC

What are outcomes of involvement for HCPs?

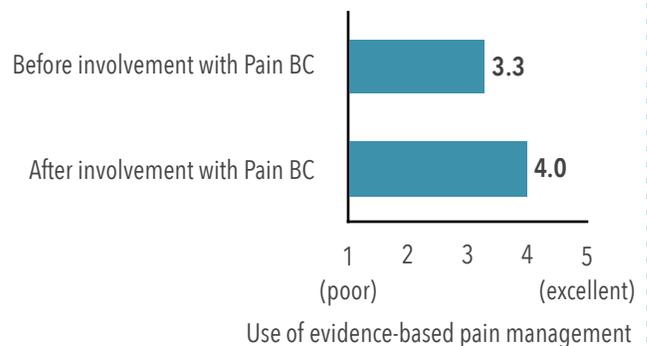
Findings from the online survey demonstrated that Pain BC has positively improved the following outcomes for HCPs involve with the organization:

- general knowledge about chronic pain*
- skills and confidence to care for PLWP*
- frequency of applying evidence-based pain management approaches (see Figure 3)
- communication with PLWP
- quality of care for PLWP
- sense of community and collaboration with other HCPs caring for PLWP

The findings marked with a (*) were corroborated by Pain BC's previously collected, program-specific evaluation feedback targeting HCPs.

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"I feel more confident in my treatments, and also more empathetic to my chronic pain patients."
.....

Figure 3. HCPs' reported frequency of applying evidence-based pain management approaches before and after their involvement with Pain BC (n = 21)



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"Educational opportunities and networking with others has been excellent...the sense of community that Pain BC brings is very important."
.....

How can Pain BC improve?

HCPs who participated in the online survey provided the following suggestions to improve Pain BC:

- * create a resource that lists all alternative HCPs who have an interest, or sensitivity to, chronic pain
- * engage with HCPs more often
- * consider moving the location of the annual conference to encourage different participants to attend

"I really like Pain BC's message and goal of teaching and improving the health care community about chronic pain. I would like to know how I can be involved more if possible."

Key Findings: Key Informants

Strategic Area #3: Facilitating the development and implementation of innovation and improvements in the health care system

Has Pain BC facilitated improvements in the health care system for PLWP?

Key informant interviewees were asked whether Pain BC has facilitated improvements in the health care system to better serve PLWP. The majority (80%; n = 8) reported that the organization has successfully influenced systems-level improvements for PLWP. Two respondents indicated that they did not have the information necessary to determine whether such changes have taken place (20%; n = 2).

Interviewees reporting that Pain BC has facilitated systems-level improvements for PLWP explained that the organization has contributed to this outcome by:

- ✔ providing evidence-based education and resources for PLWP to enhance their knowledge, skills and capacity to manage their pain (n = 6)
- ✔ providing evidence-based education and resources for HCPs, which translates into improved accuracy, quality and sensitivity of care (n = 6)
- ✔ delivering interdisciplinary educational and networking opportunities, which encourages collaboration and a shared care approach to most effectively address pain for those affected (n = 6)
- ✔ raising awareness about pain to advocate for the attention it deserves (n = 4)
- ✔ advocating for, and informing the development of, pain programs at the health authority level to improve access to services for PLWP (n = 4)
- ✔ acting as the key, central source of information and resources related to chronic pain in BC (n = 3)
- ✔ informing policy making on pain (n = 3)
- ✔ facilitating the establishment of a network of diverse stakeholders dedicated to addressing issues surrounding chronic pain (n = 3)

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“Pain BC was a contributing when making decisions about pain programs at the health authority level. We asked for and received input from them in the development of the model of our pain program.”
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Has Pain BC formed partnerships?

The majority of interview respondents reported that Pain BC has actively formed partnerships to improve the health system for PLWP (90%; n = 9). One interviewee indicated that they did not have the necessary information to answer this question.

Has Pain BC encouraged collaboration?

The majority of interview respondents (70%; n = 7) reported that Pain BC has encouraged collaboration within the health care system to better address pain in the province, whereas a smaller number of interviewees (30%; n = 3) identified areas for improvement. Areas for improvement addressed the need for Pain BC to improve collaboration with non-profit organizations conducting similar or related work.

Has Pain BC impacted the perception of pain as an issue among decision makers?

Interview respondents were asked to consider whether Pain BC has impacted the perception of pain as an issue among decision makers in health care. The majority of interviewees (70%; n = 7) reported that Pain BC has been successful in accomplishing this goal, while two respondents explained that there is still work to be done. One interviewee did not provide a response to this question.

How can Pain BC improve?

Key informant interviewees provided a range of suggestions on how Pain BC can improve their efforts in the future, including the following:

- ✳ maintain a focus on education, communications, and creating systems change to ensure that efforts are not diluted or of poor quality
- ✳ continue to adopt an approach that is rooted in the provision of evidence-based information
- ✳ identify and engage a political champions (both locally and nationally)
- ✳ seek out new Board of Directors that have high-level business skills, as well as a strong financial and political pull in their communities

Conclusions and Next Steps

Findings from this evaluation have demonstrated that Pain BC is making substantial progress towards achieving each of their strategic areas. A description of progress made for each strategic area is below.

For strategic area #1, substantial progress has been made in improving knowledge of chronic pain and pain management techniques among PLWP and their friends and family members. Among PLWP, changes in confidence and behaviour have also been noted, including increased confidence to manage their pain and use of pain management techniques.

Significant progress has also been made towards achieving strategic area #2. Evaluation findings show that HCP's knowledge about chronic pain, and skills and confidence to care for PLWP have improved as a result of Pain BC. HCPs' frequency of applying evidence-based pain management approaches also improved.

Gradual progress towards achieving strategic area #3 has also been made. Most key informant interviewees reported that while Pain BC has facilitated improvements in the health care system to better serve PLWP, substantial work remains ahead.

Based on the findings from this evaluation, a range of considerations for next steps have been proposed to Pain BC. The following is a description of the key suggestions made.

1) Continue to offer programs & services

Results from this evaluation have demonstrated that there is a great need for the programs and services provided by Pain BC. As a result, the organization should seek out additional funding opportunities to ensure the sustainability of the work, as well as a potential extension of services.

2) Extend the program's reach and focus

Pain BC should consider extending the program's reach and focus given evaluation findings. Specifically, consideration should be given to extending the reach of the programs across BC for all target groups and facilitating peer support programs for PLWP.

3) Increase opportunities for engagement

Findings from this evaluation demonstrated that the engagement of PLWP in the design, delivery and evaluation of Pain BC's programs was fairly low. Given that the engagement of people with lived experience has demonstrated to improve the relevance, acceptability and effectiveness of programs, Pain BC should consider increasing their engagement efforts.

4) Continue to foster partnerships & enhance collaboration

Pain BC should continue to foster partnerships with relevant players to effectively address the multi-faceted issue of chronic pain in the province. Evaluation results have shown that collaboration with such partners has been critical to the success Pain BC has achieved to date. Given the benefits of collaboration, Pain BC should aim to collaborate more with non-profit organizations doing similar or related work.

5) Continue to evaluate efforts

Pain BC should continue to evaluate their efforts in the future to assess areas for improvement and outcomes of programs and services.

Interested in learning more about this evaluation? Read the full-length version of this evaluate report!