THE FACES OF
CHRONIC PAIN

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CHRONIC PAIN
“Be open minded... more accepting... acknowledge it!”

“I am in this box called chronic pain and it is invisible!”

“I look like a perfectly healthy human being! I am not making it up!”

JUST BELIEVE ME!

What we want you to know about living with persistent pain

• “This is a marathon between you and your brain and you gotta win!”
  “It’s the pain that’s grabbing you and pulling you in different ways
  and am mostly friggin negative ways and you just have to persist
  through it. It’s a challenge!”
• “I find myself trying to stretch the pain killers out and not take
  them and try and put up with as much pain as I can”
• “It was difficult for me to have a shower because every movement
  was causing me excruciating pain!”
• “Chronic pain doesn’t come without emotional pain.. I think
  everybody loses a piece of their life with it... you lose a piece of
  your identity”
• “You have to redefine your identity... and I don’t think its an
  overnight process. 4 ½ years later... I’m still finding... who I am with
  this chronic illness”
• “I don’t want you to feel sorry for me. Don’t look at me with pity.
  Understand what is going on... have empathy”

This is how my pain feels physically

• “I can only describe it as creepy crawly snakes in there and I
  couldn’t get at it”
• “Is to this day like an elephant is sitting on my lower back.... it is
  just heavy all the time”
• “Like someone split my head in the middle with an axe”
• “It just starts to ache and then the aching turns to throbbing”
• “Really sharp pains that go across your chest, they would shoot
  across”
• “Try cold and the burning hot, the prickly feeling, um you get aching
  feeling it feels like you are being stabbed by a knife”
• “I’m on fire like a burn “ “When I am putting my whole hand in water
  its as if I am running my hand under a tap of acid”
• “deep deep muscle ache, like you think its really deep inside but
  can’t figure it out”

Our social loss & gradually defining our new normal

✓ “There are people that have just quietly drifted off because I can’t do the activities
  that I was doing before so when you are not there you are kinda out of sight out of mind”
✓ “You have to compromise and that is all well and good but it was looking as if I wouldn’t
  be able to do anything for a really long time”
✓ “The social loss can be huge. I don’t know
  for me I still morn the loss of my old life”
✓ “It’s not like I am out dancing... you have to
  carry on, I want to carry on and keep doing
  things”
✓ “I still manage pain everyday but I have
  experienced some improvements”
✓ “A lot of people that figured it out; how to
  live well with chronic pain”

Chronic pain differs from a broken ankle!

• Chronic pain affects ~ 50% of Canadians yet a
  public opinion survey identifies only 50%
  believe chronic pain exists!
• The general public identifies with acute pain
  which is a normal physiological response that
  resolves.
• Chronic pain is very different because it is
  complex and includes a neurological
  component that never resolves.

Acknowledgements:

Research Project by JoAnne Nelmes, RN, BSN, MN
Associate Professor, University of the Fraser Valley

Thank you to Elise St. Martin, UFV BA Student for her assistance with this public engagement project.

Thank you to the research participants for their bravery, trust and willingness to share their challenges and successes of living with persistent pain.

This research was funded by the UFV Faculty of Health Science Research Grant from the Dean of Health Science, Joanne MacLean. Thank You.