

# Emotions & behaviours of people living with MSK disorders

Implication for  
clinical practice:  
umbrella review of  
qualitative research  
syntheses & meta-  
summaries.



**Healthcare professionals supporting individuals with MSK disorders should assess emotions beyond pain-related fear, observe cognitive responses, and evaluate behavioral patterns.**

# Context

We have known for a long time that it is not just physiological impairments that impact musculoskeletal disorders. This paper looked to summarise the emotions, cognitions, and behaviours of people living with musculoskeletal disorders related to symptoms and the interactions of emotions, cognitions, and behaviours with the person's environment.

# Methods

- CINAHL, EMBASE, PsycARTICLES, PsycEXTRA, PsycINFO, PubMed, and PubPsych from database inception to January 2021 were included in the literature search. Gray literature via Open Grey and Google Scholar were also utilised.
- Study selection criteria included qualitative evidence syntheses evaluating adults with musculoskeletal disorders, based on the multidimensional diagnostic criteria for acute and chronic pain. Emotions, cognitions, and behaviours were the phenomenon of interest.
- 3 categories of themes were developed (emotions, cognitions, and behaviours) for each objective. The 3 most common emotions, cognitions, and behaviours were selected and appear as themes in the narrative synthesis.

# Results

- 20 qualitative evidence syntheses that retrieved 284 original qualitative studies were included.
- Despair, distress, and fear were the main emotions reported by people living with musculoskeletal disorders.
- Alterations of the self and how people described their symptoms, what caused them, and how the symptoms impacted their lives were the most common cognitions.
- Cognitive strategies (i.e., acceptance) and perceptions about social support emerged. People often used passive behaviours (e.g., social isolation or hiding symptoms) to cope with the challenges that arose related to musculoskeletal symptoms.
- However, some people actively faced their symptoms, planning their activities or practicing them despite their symptoms.

# Reference

Martinez-Calderon, J., Matias-Soto, J., & Luque-Suarez, A. (2022). "My Pain Is Unbearable... I Cannot Recognize Myself!" Emotions, Cognitions, and Behaviors of People Living With Musculoskeletal Disorders: An Umbrella Review. *Journal of Orthopaedic & Sports Physical Therapy*, 52(5), 243-A102.