

AB228. The role of forgiveness in chronic pain—a systematic review

Sheena O’Beirne¹, Dominic Harmon²

¹University of Limerick, Graduate Entry Medical School, Co. Limerick, Ireland; ²Department of Anaesthesia, University Hospital Limerick, Limerick, Ireland

Background: Forgiveness is becoming increasingly recognised for its role in healthcare, having shown promising effects in patients suffering myriad diseases, including coronary artery disease, HIV, breast cancer, and pain. This study is a review of the current literature examining forgiveness and its relationship specifically to pain.

Methods: In July 2019 a search was carried out of electronic databases (Academic Search Complete, AMED, Biomedical Reference Collection, General Science, Medline, PsycArticles, PsycInfo, Social Sciences Full Text and SPORTDiscus). Further results were obtained from reference lists. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied

using preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) guidelines for systematic reviews.

Results: The initial search yielded 354 results, and after duplicates were removed and inclusion and exclusion criteria applied, the final result was seven papers to be reviewed. Of the seven papers reviewed, five showed a relationship between low reported levels of forgiveness and increased experience of pain. One paper indicated a relationship between empathy and pain, which could be modulated by forgiveness. One study resulted in a higher level of pain among patients with higher forgiveness scores, although it was qualified that this particular patient population had a higher attachment anxiety, which may have impeded their ability to utilise forgiveness therapy.

Conclusions: There is an association between the capacity to forgive and the experience of pain. Further research should examine forgiveness as an intervention in a population of pain patients to explore this relationship further.

Keywords: Anger; forgiveness; pain

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