

Treatment Waitlists: Patient Impact and Service Considerations

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Multidisciplinary treatment is the gold standard for the management of chronic pain, but accessing it often involves very long and indefinite waits which can perpetuate the cycle of disability and suffering. Although these waits are almost universally condemned, exactly when *long* becomes *too long* is unclear. In fact, there is a paucity of research directly examining the impact of waiting for chronic pain treatment on patient outcomes and this has restricted advocacy efforts to focus on ethical concerns rather than evidence-based impacts. It is imperative that clinicians and health care decision makers improve their understanding of the impact of these wait-times on patient outcomes and actively work to improve access to evidence-based care.

To this end, data from a large scale prospective longitudinal study will be presented, articulating the impact of being indefinitely waitlisted on individuals living with chronic pain. Next, two opportunities for facilitating more timely access to evidence-based care will be explored, namely staff resourcing and the provision of pre-clinic education. Finally, the implications of these projects for service design and delivery will be discussed, including recommendations for the development of waitlist standards for chronic pain services.