

# Creative tools used by clinicians working with emerging adults with chronic pain

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## Why use creative tools?

### Background:

- Chronic pain affects 1 in 5 emerging adults (aged 18-30) in Scotland (The Scottish Health Survey 2022), thereby disadvantaging their physical, emotional, educational, and social wellbeing and peer relationships (Fisher, 2018).
- Emerging adults are vulnerable due to key transitions occurring in the transfer from paediatric care to adult health care, and the associated challenges for their communication patterns.
- Understanding another's pain and communicating that pain has traditionally been one of the greatest hurdles for high quality healthcare.

### Objective(s):

This study aimed to understand clinicians' perspective on the current and future roles of creative tools in the support they provide to emerging adults with chronic pain.

### Methods:

A Qualtrics quantitative online survey (21 questions) disseminated, via social media and the Scottish Pain Research Community (SPaRC), to healthcare professionals working with young adults in chronic pain. Healthcare professionals were eligible to participate if they worked with young adults for a period of 1 year or more.

### Results:

Who? 26 clinicians, with on average 8 years' experience

#### What?

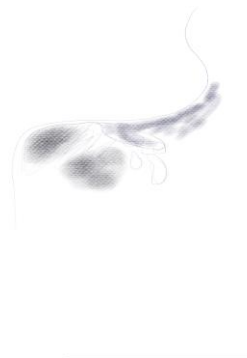
- Most clinicians (60%) were very interested in using creative tools
- 52.63% used creative tools to aid communication, such as mobile visual Apps, drawing, imagery in letter writing to self
- Reasons for not using creative tools were no training available (41.67%), accessibility to materials (25%), and either not on offer to staff or not requested (either 8.33%)

## Overview of used Creative Tools

Imagery, Writing compassionate letters to self.

1. Pain Drawings using Mobile Apps
2. Drawings: Starting with a body chart but allow patients to use different colours, words/arrows to describe their pain. Or give them blank paper to draw their pain (patients seem to find this more difficult).
3. Metaphors: especially to do with the struggle of trying to control pain and other negative experiences.
4. Thinking strategies: watching thoughts like leaves on a stream or putting thoughts on the sides of cars and watching them drive away - to create distance from thoughts.
5. Adaptive software to create images and drawings

**Figure:** Drawing example of shoulder pain, in the ball joint



## How to make creative tools more accessible and helpful?

- A toolkit of resource with examples of creative tools which is centralized and easily accessible
- Information and training
- funding
- dedicated secretarial support
- having longer appointment times with patient to enable creative tool use

**Conclusions:** Strong interest in using creative practices, but an urgent need to provide better accessibility and training in using creative tools.

### Patient relevance:

Increasing the use of creative tool use can help to overcome communication challenges by making the pain visible, build trust and validation in aid patient care and hence allow for more personalised care pathways.

## References

- Fisher, E. Heathcote, L. C., Eccleston, C. Simons, L. E., and Palermo, T. M., (2018). Assessment of Pain Anxiety, Pain Catastrophizing, and Fear of Pain in Children and Adolescents with Chronic Pain: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis, *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 43(3), 314–325, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jpepsy/jsx103>
- The Scottish Health Survey 2022: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-health-survey-2022-volume-1-main-report/pages/9/#>