

Pain hurting economy, workplace productivity: Survey

BY BECKY RYNOR, CANWEST NEWS SERVICE MAY 28, 2009

QUEBEC — Misunderstood and often under treated, pain is taking a toll on the economy and "debilitating" productivity in the Canadian workplace according to a survey released Thursday.

"Our growing pain crisis will only intensify if we don't provide appropriate treatment to people on a timely basis," said Dr. Roman Jovey, a spokesman for painexplained.ca, an advocacy group committed to raising awareness of under-treated pain in Canada.

"It is a national embarrassment that our medical system pays so little attention to a problem that is so common and costly."

Nanos Research polled 4,000 adult, employed Canadians over 2007 and 2008.

It found more than 18 per cent of adults suffer from chronic pain.

Of the 600 moderate to severe chronic pain sufferers given a more detailed survey, it found almost 60 per cent had lost their job, suffered loss of income or had a reduction in responsibilities as a result of their pain. The survey also indicated that pain had a significant effect on absenteeism, with an average of 28.5 lost work days per year.

"Our medical system is so focused on finding the cure for the underlying disease that we are ignoring the ongoing suffering of people with pain, Jovey said. "Veterinary students receive five times the amount of training in pain management than doctors do. This means that your dog will likely receive better pain treatment than your mother, partner, child — or you."

The advocacy organization also said health care costs for treating chronic pain "are skyrocketing," estimating those costs to be more than \$6 billion per year.

"By 2025, with the aging population, these costs can be expected to rise to more than \$10 billion per year," Jovey said.

The survey says 70.5 per cent of people suffering moderate to severe chronic pain sufferers are currently being treated by a physician for their pain.

"This number will only increase," Jovey said.

The survey indicated that chronic pain sufferers also experience mental health issues, with almost 30 per cent of chronic pain sufferers saying they have also been diagnosed with depression.

More than 20 per cent were diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, while almost 12 per cent reported

being diagnosed with both, the survey found.

Survey data also reported that when compared to people with depression, emphysema, kidney failure and heart disease, chronic pain sufferers report the lowest health-related quality of life.

The margin of error for the entire survey results are accurate to within plus or minus 2.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, according to Nanos Research.

painexplained.ca is an awareness and advocacy campaign founded by the Canadian Pain Society, Canadian Pain Coalition, and the Canadian Pain Foundation aimed at raising awareness of under treated pain in Canada.

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