



# In Motion

Highlighting Articles Advancing Pain Research in Canada and the World

## Featured article:

Grocott, B., Sommer, J. L., & El-Gabalawy, R. (2021). **Usual presence and intensity of pain are differentially associated with suicidality across chronic pain conditions: A population-based study.** *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 148, 110557. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsychores.2021.110557>

## Key insights from the study:

- **Pain Intensity and Suicide Risk:** The study finds that the frequency and severity of chronic pain are linked to suicidal thoughts and behaviors.
- **Differences Among Pain Conditions:** The risk of suicidality varies across different chronic pain conditions like arthritis, migraines, and back pain.
- **Higher Pain, Higher Risk:** More severe pain is generally associated with higher risks of suicidal thoughts, plans, and attempts.

## What happened?

Researchers analyzed data from the 2012 Canadian Community Health Survey, which included responses from over 25,000 people. They looked at how often and how severe pain was in conditions like arthritis, migraines, and back pain and how this was connected to suicidality. Participants reported how frequently they experienced pain and its intensity, and whether they had experienced suicidal thoughts, plans, or attempts.

## Why is it important?

This study shows that people with certain pain conditions who frequently experience severe and constant pain are at a higher risk of having suicidal thoughts and behaviors. For example, individuals with frequent and severe pain from migraines or back pain were found to have higher rates of suicide risk, and this is even after accounting for the potential influence of co-occurring mental disorders. Understanding these connections can help healthcare providers better identify and support people who are at risk.

## What now?

The study suggests that healthcare providers should carefully monitor patients with chronic pain for signs of suicide risk, especially if their pain is severe or constant. By creating treatment plans that address both the physical pain and the emotional distress, providers can better support their patients. Future research should explore why these connections exist and develop ways to lower the risk of suicide in people with chronic pain.

