

Pain Medicine in Israel : Examination of Services, Solutions and Challenges

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Abstract

Chronic pain poses a major challenge to healthcare systems, impacting quality of life and leading to income loss, mental health issues, addiction, and suicide. It is more prevalent with age and among women. Despite its widespread impact, there is limited data on the challenges and needs of pain medicine in Israel.

This study aimed to examine challenges in pain medicine both in Israel and internationally, analyze existing solutions, and propose relevant strategies for Israel.

The research incorporated interviews, focus groups, and a survey, using qualitative and quantitative methods. during 2023–2024 In-depth interviews were conducted with 53 policymakers and service providers to assess challenges and coping strategies. A focus group with 18 patients provided insights into patient experiences, and a survey of 57 pain specialists was conducted based on the qualitative findings.

Key needs identified included better patient support, prevention of caregiver's burnout, and extended consultation times. Major challenges involved limited appointment availability, opioid and cannabis management, dissatisfaction with working conditions, diagnostic difficulties, and lack of service accessibility. Proposed solutions emphasized strengthening community care, integrating multidisciplinary teams, and expanding the roles of additional healthcare professionals. Physicians highlighted the need for better pain treatment in peripheral areas, community-based services, and new technologies, with 87% supporting nurse practitioner in pain management. Patients reported appointment shortages, caregiver attitudes, treatment costs, diagnostic difficulties, and a lack of caregivers in public health.

Policy recommendations include expanding the pain care workforce, improving referral systems, enhancing community services, increasing accessibility, and raising awareness.

