Patient Experiences of a combined Exercise and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy group programme for chronic pain.

A qualitative study.

Máire-Bríd Casey, Dr Damien Lowry, Dr Conor Hearty, Ms Rachel Neary, Dr Catherine Doody
Aim

• The aim of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of participants of a multidisciplinary intervention which combined ACT with exercise as a treatment for chronic pain.
Methodology

- Thirty-six participants completed an eight-week group based Pain Management Programme
- 22 participants attended one of four focus groups
- Semi-structured interviews were conducted by independent researcher
- Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim
- Transcripts were analysed using an interpretative phenomenological approach

ACT
Supervised Exercise (Gym and Pool)
Education
Results

Theme 1. Group support and consequent validation of the pain experience
Theme 2. Frustration: lack of answers and understanding
Theme 3. Changed communication with other people
Theme 4. Practical strategies for managing pain including reduced fear of exercise and pacing
Theme 5. Values – family and self care
Theme 6. Acceptance
Theme 7. Mindfulness- Benefits and challenges
Conclusion

- Findings of this qualitative study demonstrate the acceptability of this type of intervention by individuals with chronic pain.

- Participants reported gaining fundamental insights, which impacted on their overall ability to engage as more active participants in relation to enhanced interpersonal relationships, self care and general function.

- Further high quality trials are required to determine the effectiveness of these type of combined interventions and these trials should feature embedded qualitative studies to enhance our understanding of treatment effects.