

# An Occupational Therapy Protocol of Cognitive Group Therapy Intervention for Patients with Chronic Pain

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## Abstract

Chronic pain is pain which lasts more than 3-6 months and affects about 20% of the general population. It can influence all areas of function, including physical, emotional, social, behavioral and cognitive domains. Cognitive function was found to be affected by other factors associated with chronic pain, fatigue, the effects of medications, and emotional stress factors such as depression and anxiety. Various studies indicate a decrease among this population in attention skills (divided and alternating attention), memory (principally working memory) and executive functioning. Occupational therapists often provide treatment for patient with cognitive decline that impacts daily function. In light of the advantages of group therapy in general, group therapy principles as used for other populations were adapted in order to design a protocol for cognitive group therapy for patients with chronic pain attending a pain rehabilitation day clinic. The purpose of this article is to describe this protocol. The group met for 8 sessions and focused on characteristic deficits in attention, memory and executive functions. Each session had a set structure: psycho-educational explanations on cognitive skills and the impact of pain on these skills, participation in cognitive tasks and referral to their application in daily life. The group facilitated learning and experiences through the group experience. The inter-personal dynamic among the group's participants created the uniqueness of this intervention. Data to test the effectiveness of the group

has not yet been collected, but the experience of the facilitators and the responses of the participants indicate the potential inherent in such groups. Research is needed to examine the effectiveness of the treatment and the degree of the group participants' satisfaction with this therapy. Objective measures should be used to assess the efficacy of this treatment from a cognitive-functional aspect.

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