

Survey of Metaphors in Medicine

Risha Gupta
Medical Student

Sanjeeva Gupta
Consultant in Pain Medicine

**Summary of 53 responses regarding the use of the CURRY metaphor
in medical practice**

What is a metaphor ?

- **A metaphor is a figure of speech which compares one thing to another in order to create an image or resemblance**
- **Metaphors are used in medicine to educate patients on their conditions, treatment plan, to improve understanding and compliance**
- **We believe if patients understand their condition and the rationale behind the treatment plan they are more likely to comply**
- **We also believe that if the treating healthcare professionals communicate with the patients better the engagement with and outcome of the treatments offered is likely to be better**

Metaphor for Multimodal Pain Management: Vegetable CURRY (CURRY)

- Multimodal pain management includes physiotherapy, pills, psychology, procedures, alternative and complimentary therapy, etc.
- We ask the patient to consider each modality of treatment as a spice e.g. chilli, pepper, cinnamon, etc.
- As we know when several spices are used we create a vegetable CURRY which tastes better than when only one spice is used as each spice, in addition to having its own effect / flavour, has also enhanced the effect of other spices (synergism)
- Similarly, when multiple treatment modalities are used they can help each other with enhanced effect (synergism)
- Once patients understand this concept they will have confidence to self-manage their condition with improved compliance



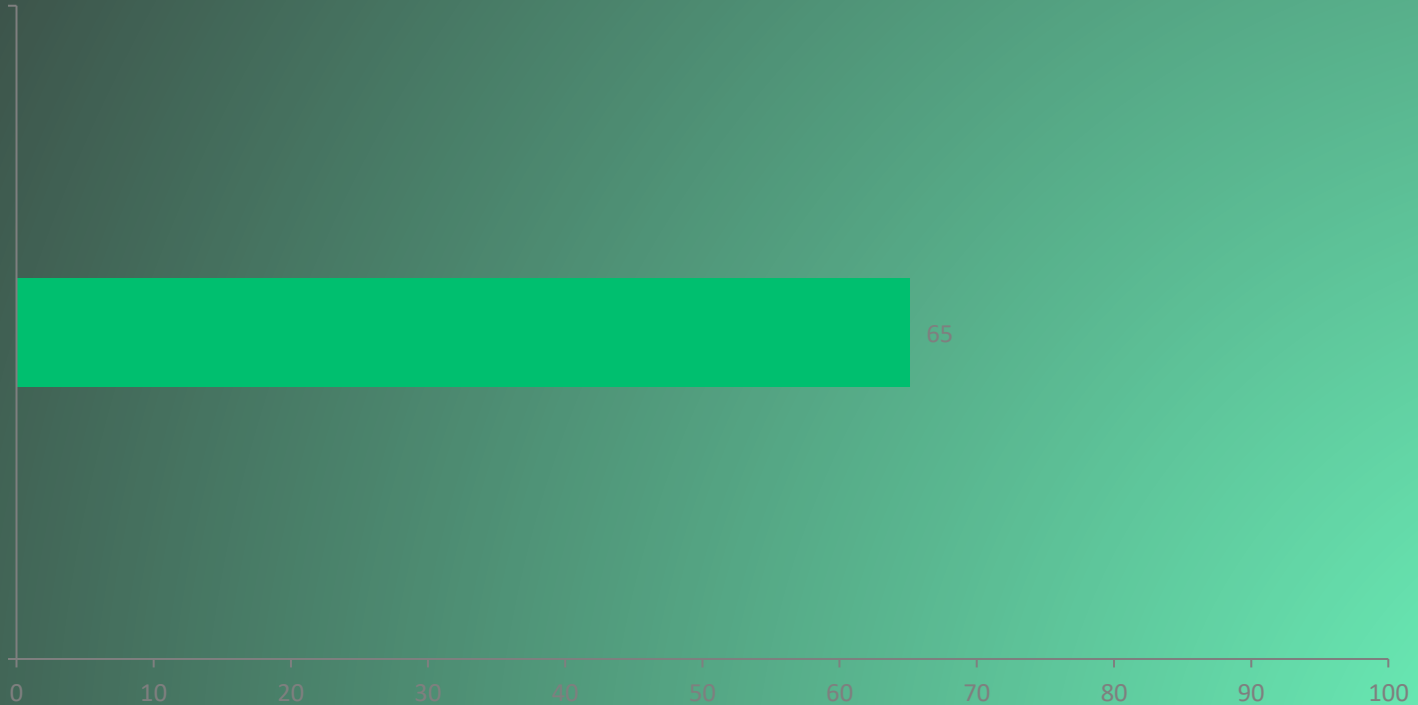
In this survey we asked the HCP:

Thinking about the above Metaphor, please answer the following questions:

Based on this concept the following questions were asked and the outcome is presented

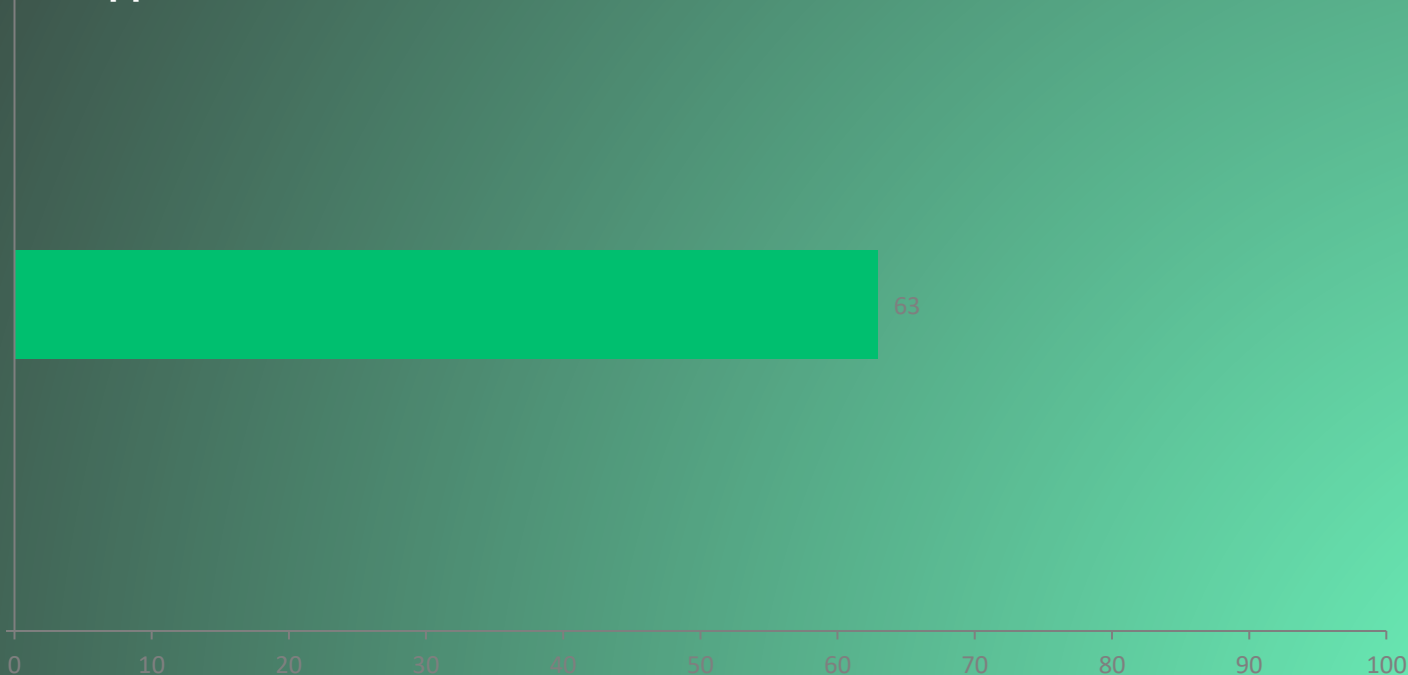
On a scale of 0 to 100 (if 0 is poor and 100 is excellent) how would you rate the metaphor (CURRY) in explaining to the patient the concept of synergism

Answered: 53 Skipped: 0



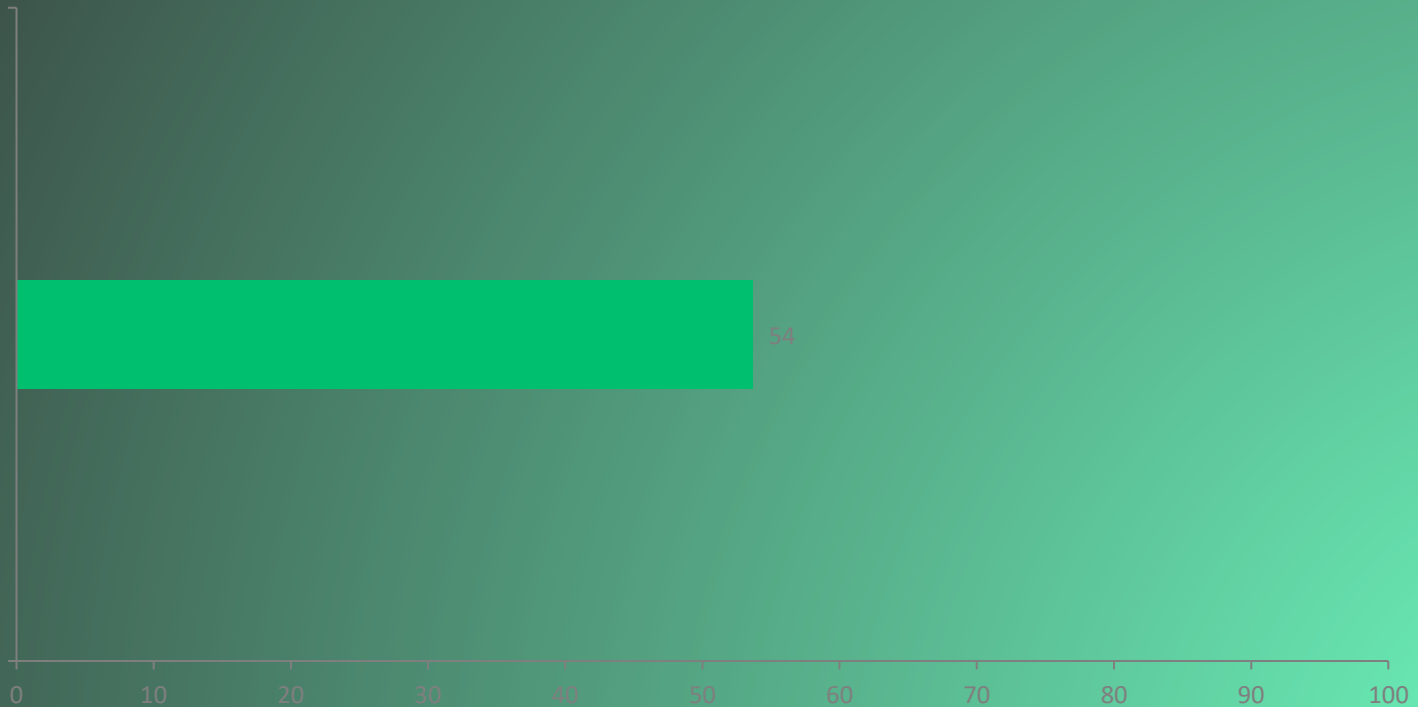
On a scale of 0 to 100 (if 0 is poor and 100 is excellent) how would you rate the metaphor (CURRY) in promoting self-management of chronic / persistent medical conditions?

Answered: 53 Skipped: 0



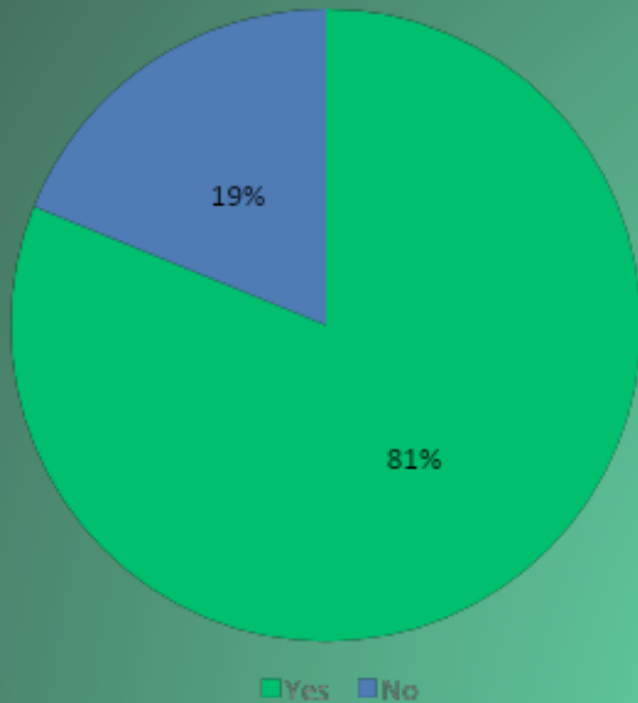
On a scale of 0 to 100 (if 0 is poor and 100 is excellent) how would you rate the metaphor (CURRY) in promoting self-management of some recurring acute medical conditions?

Answered: 53 Skipped: 0



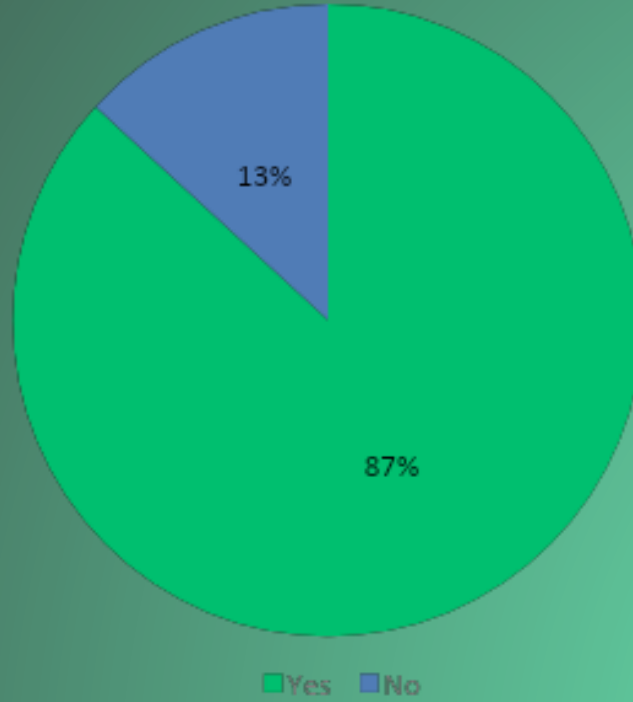
Thinking about the above Metaphor (CURRY) can it be used in the Management of **diabetes** (lifestyle change, weight reduction, education, oral medications, insulin, etc):

Answered: 53 Skipped: 0



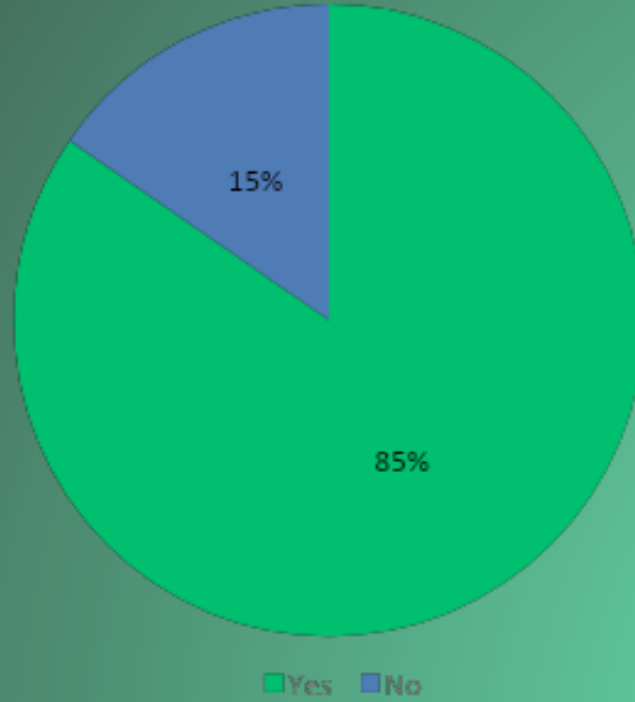
Thinking about the above Metaphor (CURRY) can it be used in the Management of **Hypertension** (lifestyle change, weight reduction, education, oral medications, etc):

Answered: 53 Skipped: 0



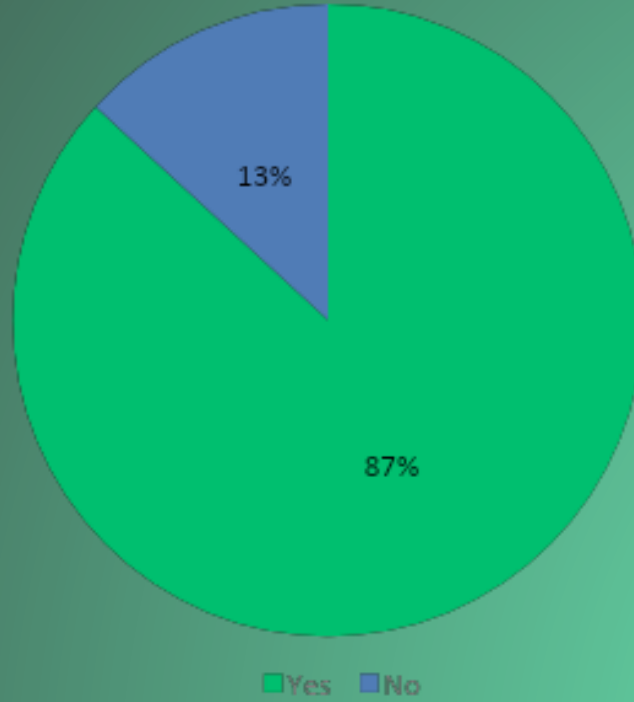
Thinking about the above Metaphor (CURRY) can it be used in the Management of some **chronic ischemic heart diseases** (lifestyle change, weight reduction, education, oral medications, etc):

Answered: 52 Skipped: 1



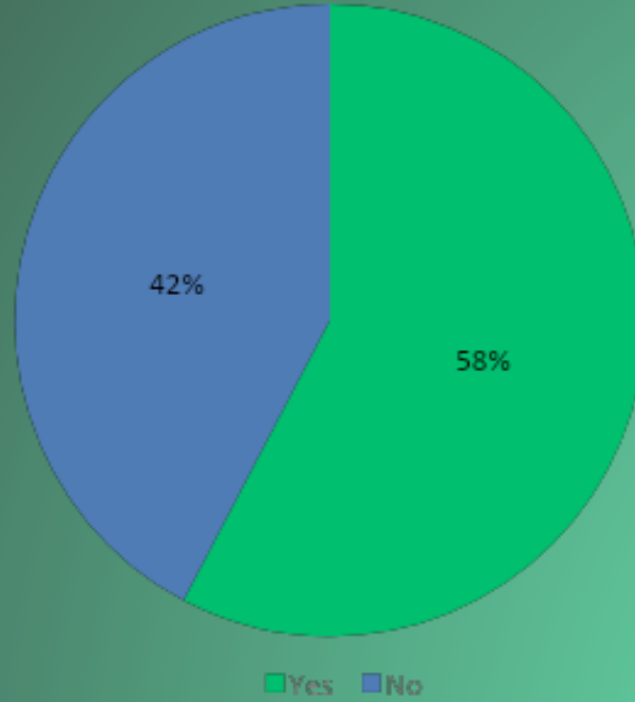
Thinking about the above Metaphor (CURRY) can it be used in the Management of **obesity** (lifestyle change, education, psychology, oral medications, etc):

Answered: 53 Skipped: 0



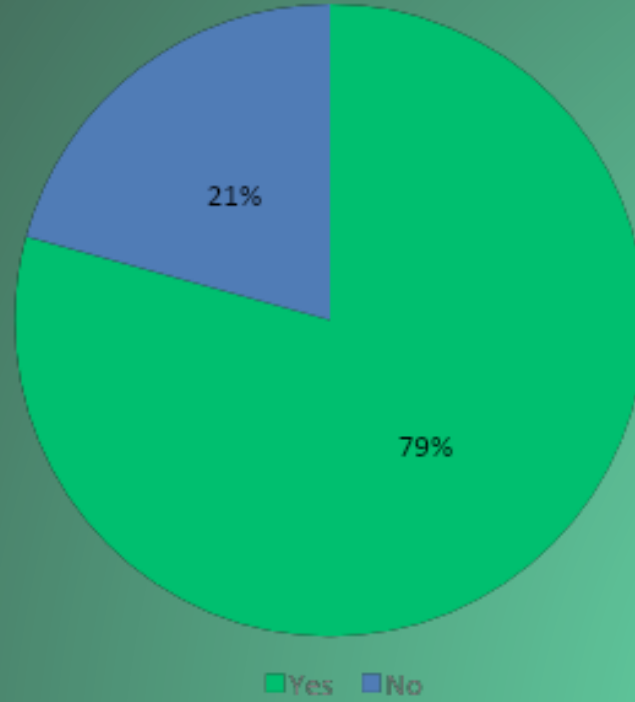
Thinking about the above Metaphor (CURRY) can it be used in the Management of **Flu/ Influenza** (lifestyle change, education, steam inhalation, saline gargle, oral medications, etc)

Answered: 52 Skipped: 1



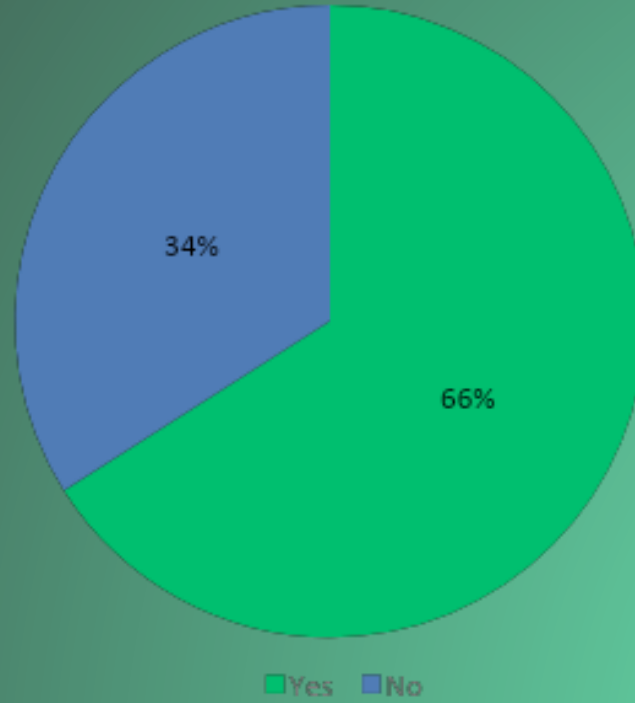
Thinking about the above Metaphor (CURRY) can it be used in the Management of some types of chronic Headache (lifestyle change, relaxation techniques, education, oral medications, etc):

Answered: 53 Skipped: 0



Thinking about the above Metaphor (CURRY) are you now likely to use this in your clinical practice

Answered: 50 Skipped: 3



Your Profession

Answered: 53 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Anaesthesia and/or Pain Management	56.60%	30
Medicine and related Specialties	20.75%	11
Surgery and related Specialties	7.55%	4
General Practice	5.66%	3
Complementary and Alternative Medicine	1.89%	1
Nurse	0%	0
Physiotherapy and related Specialties	1.89%	1
Psychology	0%	0
Medical Student	1.89%	1
Others	3.77%	2
TOTAL		53

Your place of work

Answered: 50 Skipped: 3

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
UK	90.0%	45
Europe	0%	0
Asia	10.0%	5
North America	0%	0
Australia	0%	0
Africa	0%	0
South America	0%	0
Others	0%	0
TOTAL		50

**Metaphors and Analogies Pain Management for
Patients and Health Care Professionals
A Summary of 142 responses**

**Dr Sanjeeva Gupta
Dr Manohar Sharma
Miss Risha Gupta**

Metaphor for Multimodal Pain Management: Vegetable CURRY (CURRY)

- Multimodal pain management includes physiotherapy, pills, psychology, procedures, alternative and complimentary therapy, etc.
- We ask the patient to consider each modality of treatment as a spice e.g. chilli, pepper, cinnamon, etc.
- As we know when several spices are used we create a vegetable CURRY which tastes better than when only one spice is used as each spice, in addition to having its own effect / flavour, has also enhanced the effect of other spices (synergism)
- Similarly, when multiple treatment modalities are used they can help each other with enhanced effect (synergism)
- Once patients understand this concept they will have confidence to self-manage their condition with improved compliance

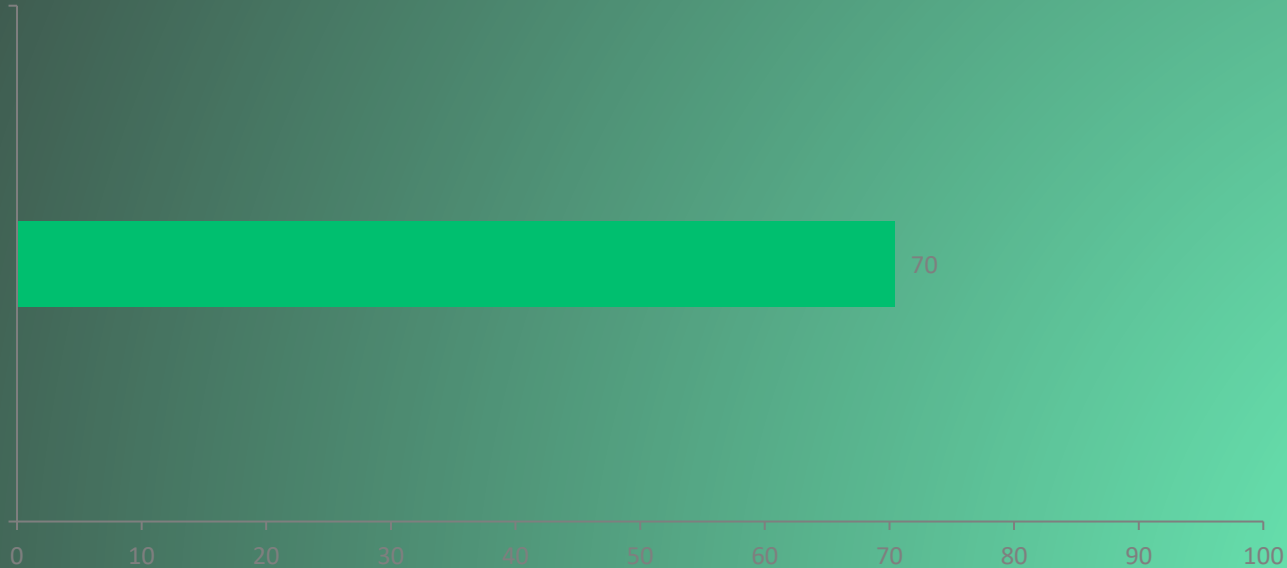


In this survey we asked the HCP:

Thinking about the above Metaphor, please answer the following questions:

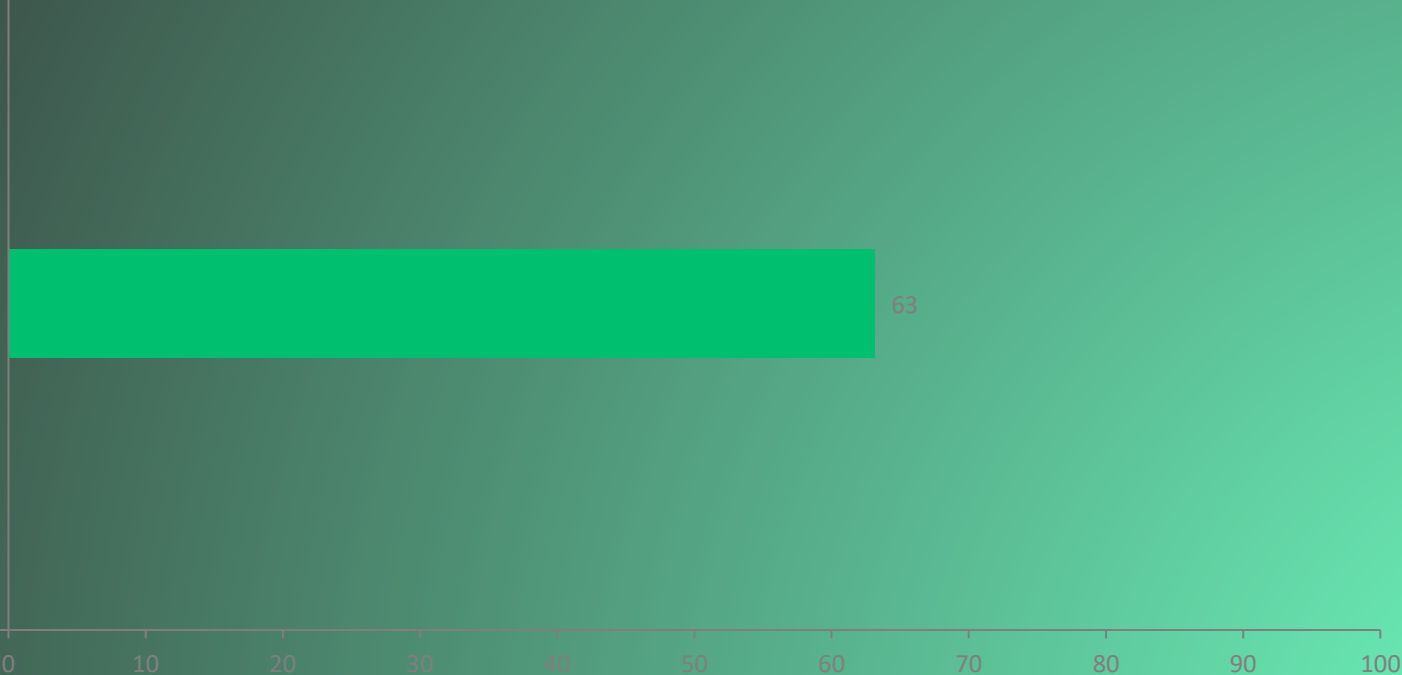
On a scale of 0 to 100 (if 0 is poor and 100 being excellent) how would you rate the CURRY metaphor in conveying/educating the patients the concept of synergism when multiple treatment modalities are used to manage chronic pain.

Answered: 139 Skipped: 3



On a scale of 0 to 100 (if 0 is poor and 100 being excellent) how would you rate the CURRY metaphor in promoting self-management of chronic / persistent pain

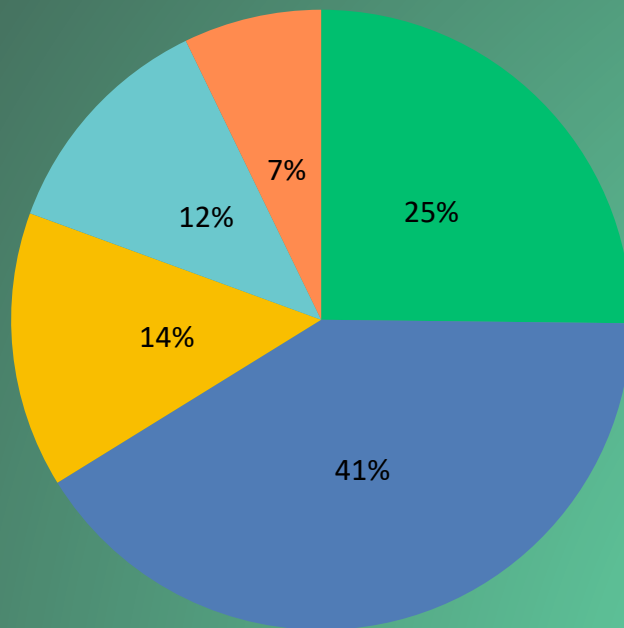
Answered: 140 Skipped: 2



Will you consider using the CURRY metaphor in your clinical practice

61% agreed that they are very likely or likely use this metaphor

Answered: 139 Skipped: 3



Very likely Likely Neither likely nor unlikely Unlikely Very unlikely

Multimodal Pain Management: Finger and a Fist – Gripping/Controlling the Pain

We ask the patient to consider each modality of treating chronic pain as a finger of their hand

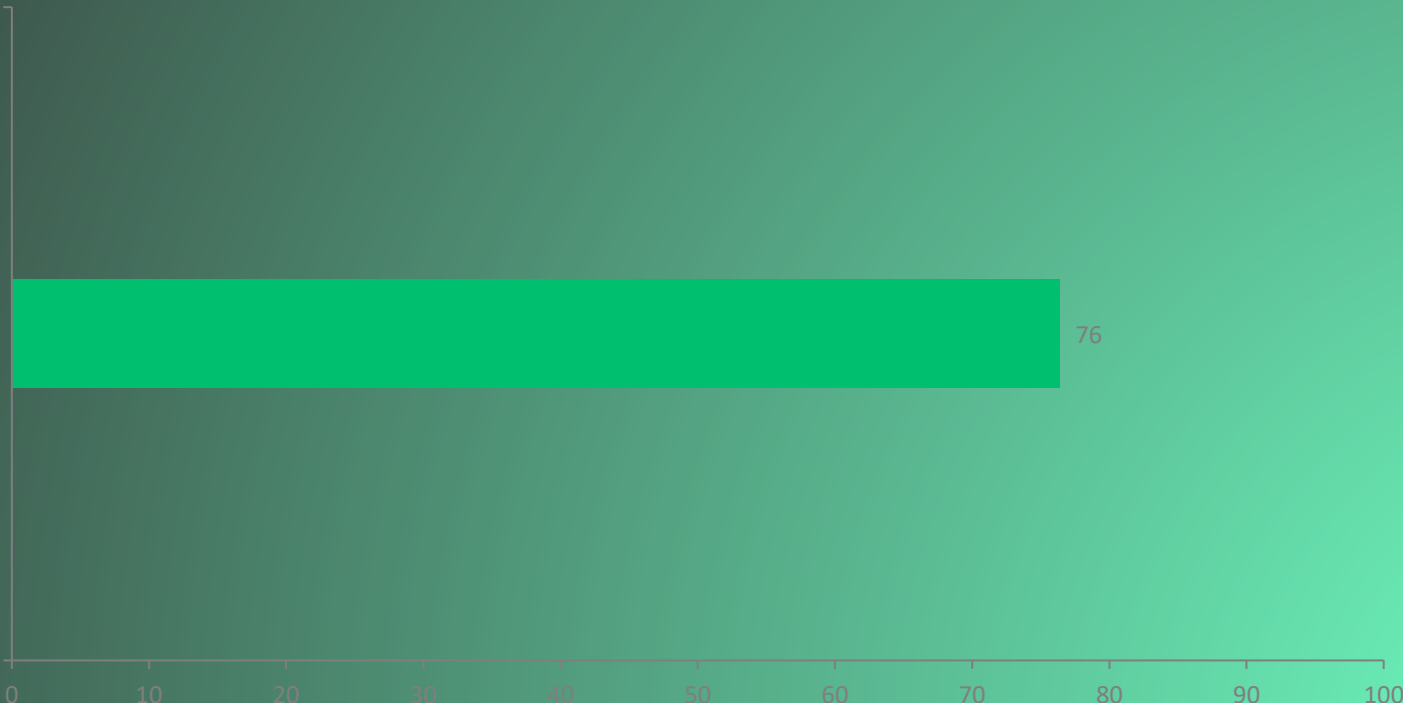
As we know we cannot hold anything with one finger. But we can grip something when all the fingers are brought together to make a fist

Similarly, one modality of treatment (one finger) may not be effective to manage chronic pain but when multiple modalities of treatments are used (like making a fist to grip something) then this can hold / control the pain better

We asked HCP who manage pain to complete the following questions:

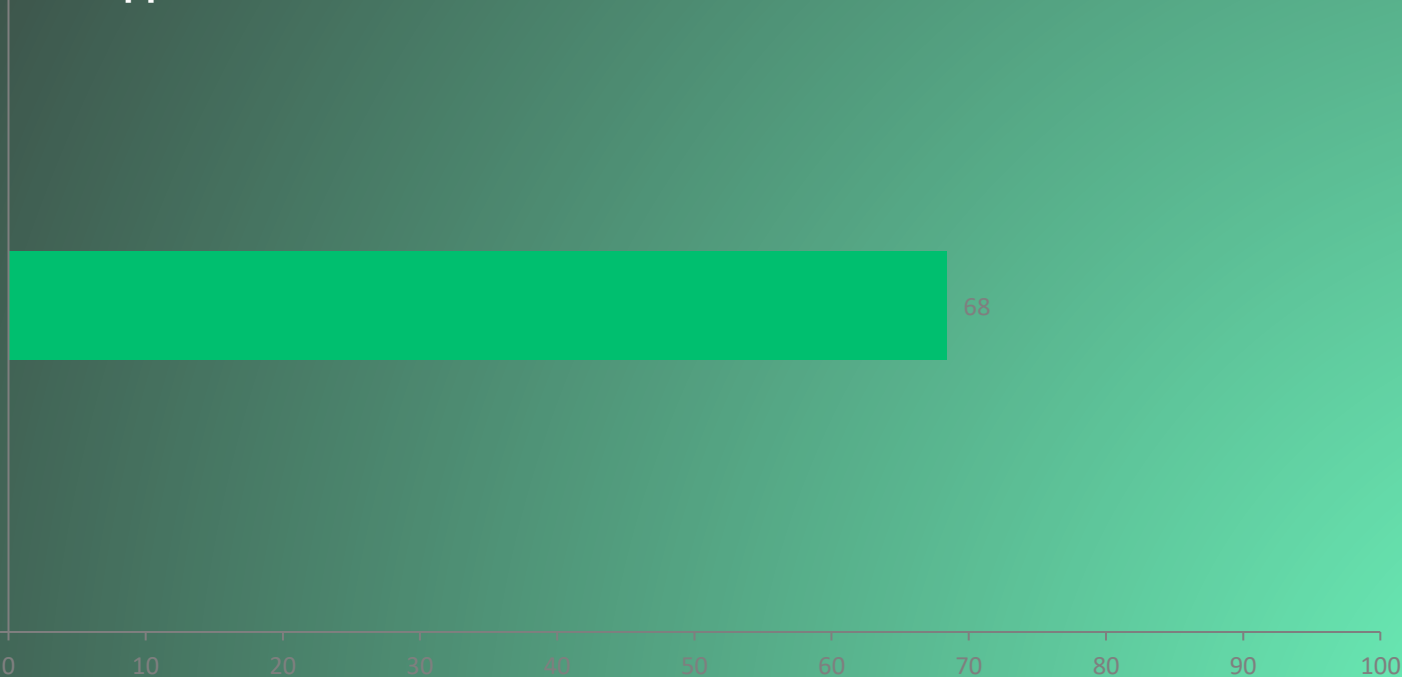
On a scale of 0 to 100 (if 0 is poor and 100 being excellent) how would you rate the “Finger and a Fist” metaphor in conveying to the patient the concept of synergism when multiple modalities of treatment are used to manage chronic pain.

Answered: 139 Skipped: 3



On a scale of 0 to 100 (if 0 is poor and 100 being excellent) how would you rate the “Finger and a Fist” metaphor in promoting self-management of chronic / persistent pain.

Answered: 137 Skipped: 5

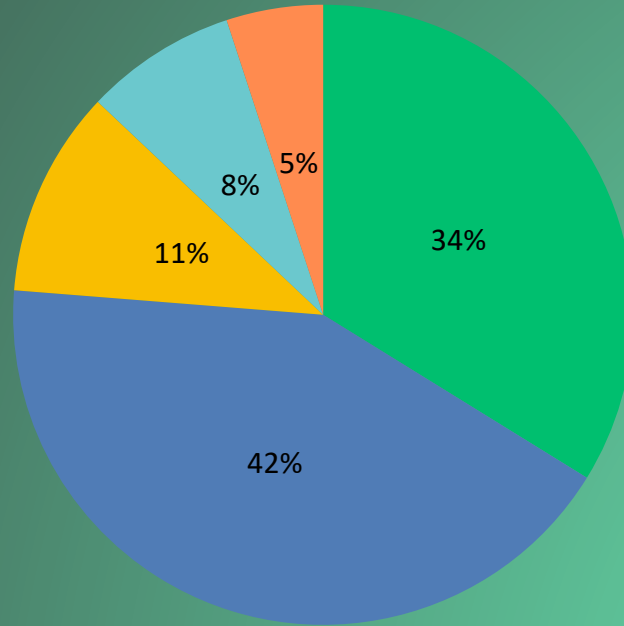


Finger and a Fist – Gripping/Controlling

Will you consider using the above metaphor in your clinical practice

76% agreed that they are very likely or likely use this metaphor in clinical practice

Answered: 139 Skipped: 3



Very likely Likely Neither likely nor unlikely Unlikely Very unlikely

Metaphors and Analogies suggested by the respondents

- **Soup**: Similar to the Vegetable CURRY, a SOUP analogy can be used
- **Buffet Meal**: This metaphor is constructed as a personalized pain management tool for the patient
- **Jigsaw Puzzle**: Each component is equally important to complete the jigsaw puzzle. Until the last part falls into place the jigsaw puzzle is not complete
- **Four legs of a Chair**: 4 legs of a Chair are required to stabilize the base for someone to sits on it

Explaining about Referred Pain

Metaphor: Candle flame (Joints) and the Heat above the flame (referred pain)

Patients who have low back pain often also complain of pain that can go to their groin, buttocks and the thighs. However, this pain is not shooting but travels down as the low back pain gets worse and is likely to be a referred pain

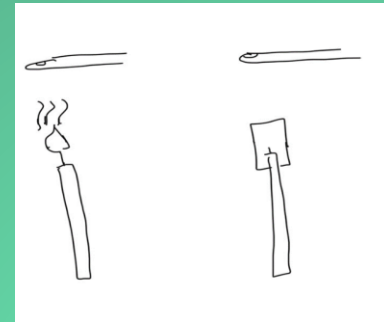
We use the metaphor, Candle flame and the Heat above the flame, to explain regarding referred pain.

We can feel the heat from a candle flame several inches above the candle flame.

Similarly pain from the different structures (flame) in the lower back can gradually spread to the groin, buttocks and the thighs when the back pain gets worse

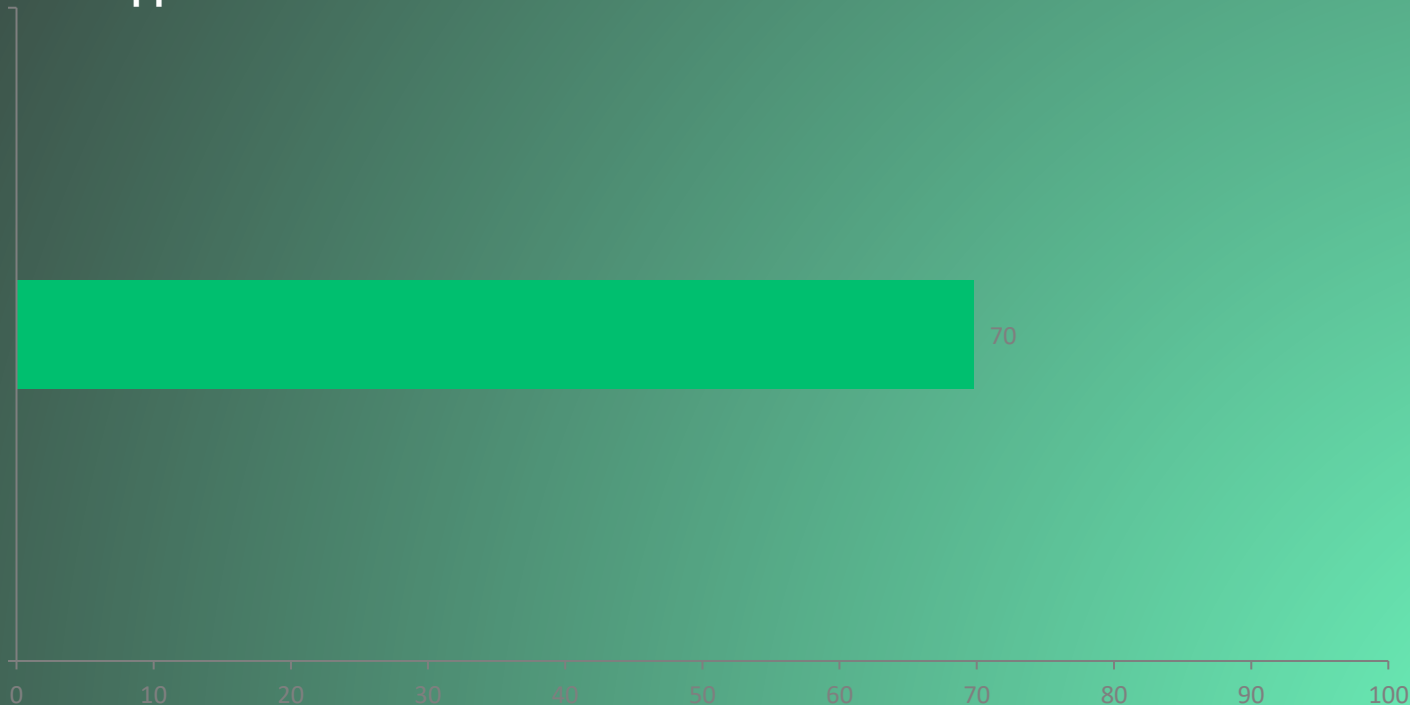
If we treat the main source of the pain in the lower back (dim or put of the flame) the pain in the groin, buttocks and thighs will also be relieved

We asked the HCP who manage pain to complete the following questions:



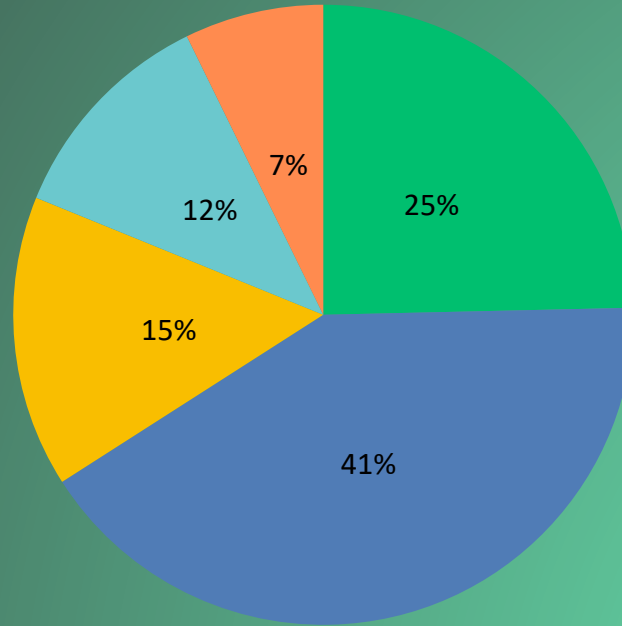
On a scale of 0 to 100 (if 0 is poor and 100 being excellent) how would you rate the metaphor “CANDLE FLAM AND HEAT ABOVE THE FLAME” in conveying to the patient the concept of referred pain.

Answered: 139 Skipped: 3



Candle flame (Joints) and the Heat above the flame (referred pain)
Will you consider using the above metaphor in your clinical practice.
66% agreed that they are very likely or likely use this metaphor clinical practice

Answered: 138 Skipped: 4



Very likely Likely Neither likely nor unlikely Unlikely Very unlikely

Metaphors and Analogies suggested by the respondents

Chest pain and pain in the left arm with heart conditions

Importance of doing regular physiotherapy exercises: Metaphor: Brick Wall and Spine

We ask patient what would they do if a brick wall is not strong enough?

They would either replace the brick wall with a new one or support / strengthen the brick wall with further cement/plastering and/or apply scaffolding to support

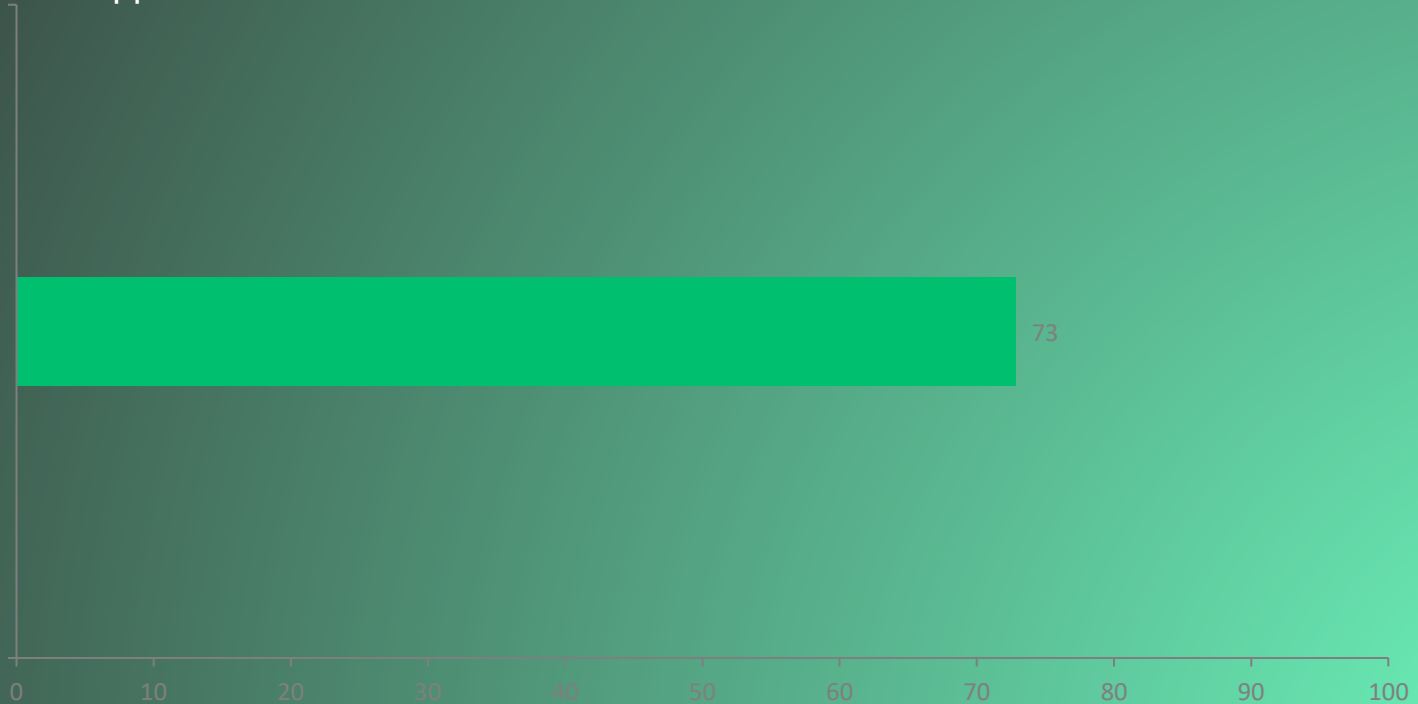
Similarly, if our Spine is not strong enough we would strengthen the muscles around the spine and also the core muscles (similar to cement/plastering and/or apply scaffolding to support the brick wall) so that the muscles can hold the spine better as replacing the spine is not an option

This metaphor will reinforce the importance of doing regular physiotherapy exercises and keep them active thus avoiding deconditioning. This is likely to help them in the long-term and give them to confidence to manage back/neck pain or any other musculoskeletal pain

We asked the HCP who manage pain to complete the following questions:

On a scale of 0 to 100 (if 0 is poor and 100 being excellent) how would you rate the metaphor “BRICK WALL AND SPINE” in conveying to the patient the importance of doing regular physiotherapy exercises

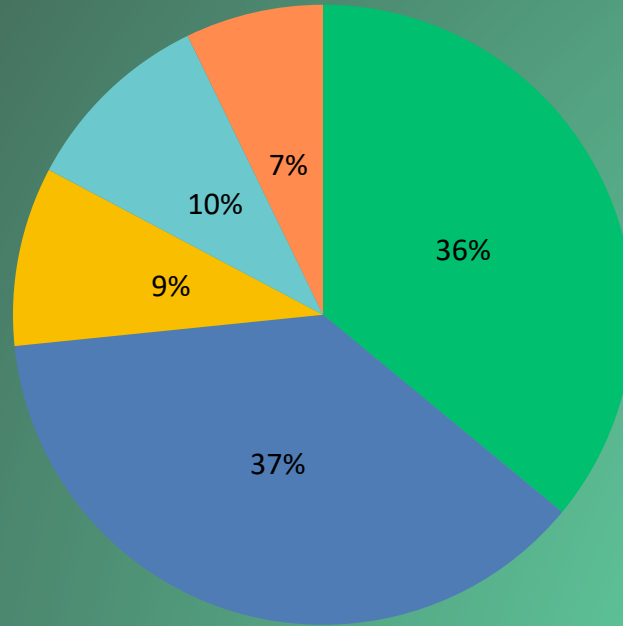
Answered: 139 Skipped: 3



Importance of doing regular physiotherapy exercises: Metaphor: Brick Wall and Spine. Will you consider using the above metaphor in your clinical practice

73% agreed that they are very likely or likely use this metaphor in practice

Answered: 139 Skipped: 3



Very likely Likely Neither likely nor unlikely Unlikely Very unlikely

Metaphors and Analogies suggested by the respondents

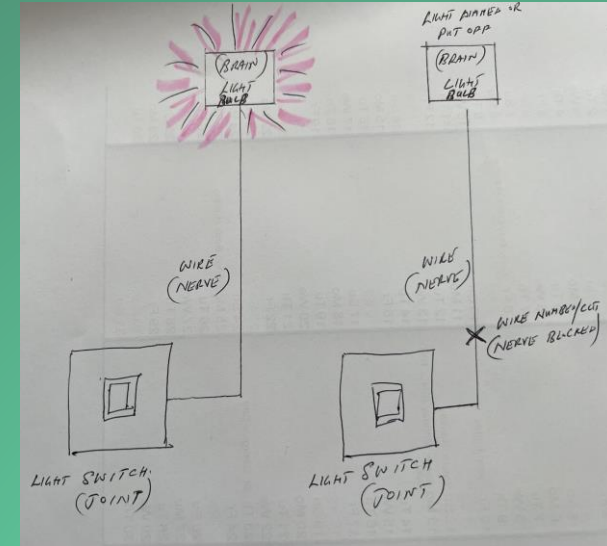
- **You will not get better at playing a Piano by practicing the Trumpet: Patients should do appropriate physiotherapy exercises on a regular basis in addition to being active by other means**
- **Knife gets sharper by grinding: Regular physiotherapy exercises can sharpen the muscles in our back and improve the strength of these muscles**
- **What happens if physiotherapy exercises are not done regularly: Lack of physiotherapy is likened to an immobilized joint in the plaster cast – weakening of muscles and stiffening of the joint**

Diagnostic blocks: Metaphor:

Electrical Light switch (Facet joint) – Electrical wire (Medial branch) – Light bulb (Brain):

We ask the patient to consider:

- The light switch as the joint that is being blocked/numbed
- The wire that connects the switch to the bulb as the nerve that carries the message from the joint to the brain and
- The light bulb as the brain where the pain is experienced



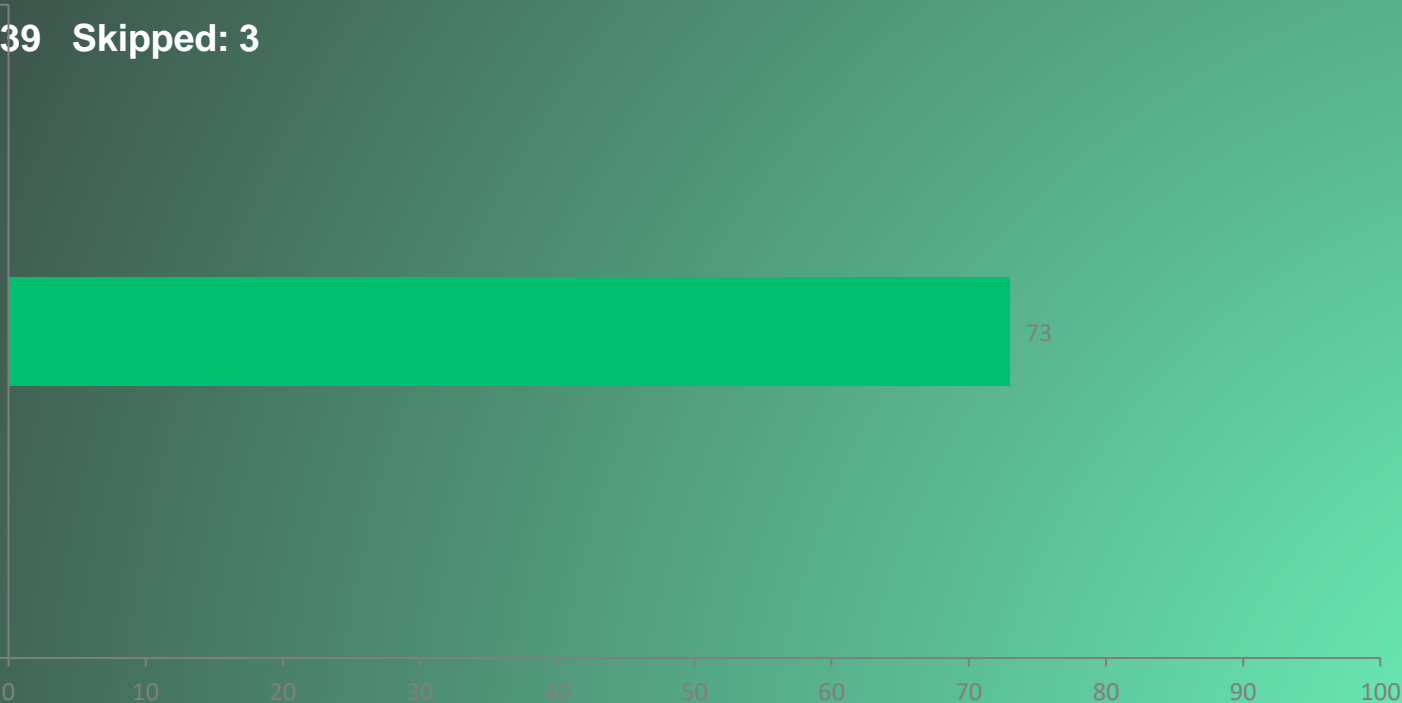
The pain message has to travel from the joint via the nerves to the brain where the pain is experienced

If we numb or block the wire (nerve) and if the light bulb dims or shuts off (pain gets better) then as we know that the wire connects the light switch (joint) to the light bulb (brain), we can infer that the source of the pain could be the joint which was supplied by the nerve that was blocked.

We asked the HCP who manage pain to complete the following questions:

On a scale of 0 to 100 (if 0 is poor and 100 being excellent) how would you rate the metaphor “Electrical Switch – Electrical Wires – Light bulb” in conveying to the concept of diagnostic spinal interventions (e.g. diagnostic medial branch block for cervical or lumbar facet joint pain)

Answered: 139 Skipped: 3

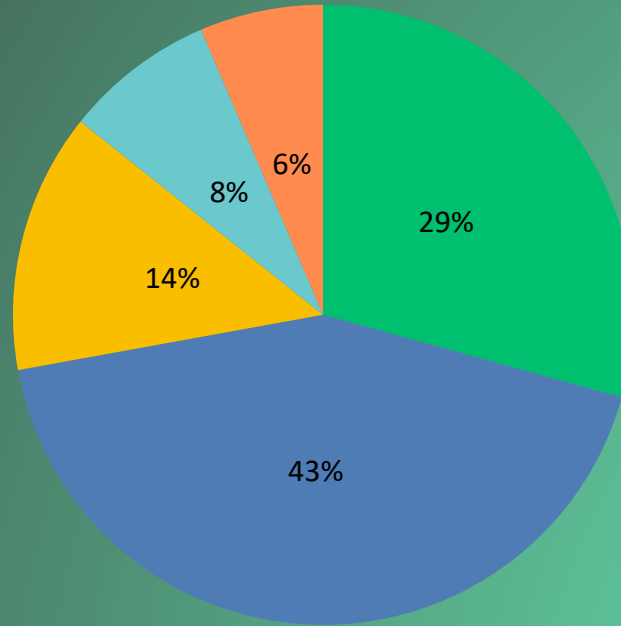


Diagnostic blocks: Metaphor:

Electrical Light switch (Facet joint)–Electrical wire (Medial branch)–Light bulb (Brain)

72% agreed they are very likely or likely use this metaphor in clinical practice

Answered: 140 Skipped: 2



Very likely Likely Neither likely nor unlikely Unlikely Very unlikely

Metaphors and Analogies suggested by the respondents

- **Like going to the Dentist”**
- **Electrical fuse in specific rooms - Coeliac plexus block, etc.**
- **Finding a Thief and putting them in prison – Diagnostic block followed by RFD**

Your Profession

Answered: 141 Skipped: 1

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Anaesthesia and Pain Management	88.65%	125
Medicine and allied speciality	0.71%	1
Surgery and allied speciality	0%	0
Physiotherapy and allied specialty	2.84%	4
Nursing and allied speciality	1.42%	2
Psychology	0%	0
General Practice	0%	0
Others	0%	0
Other (please specify)	6.38%	9
TOTAL		141

Your place of work

Answered: 141 Skipped: 1

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
UK	39.72%	56
Europe	0%	0
Asia	57.45%	81
North America	2.84%	4
Australia and New Zealand	0%	0
Africa	0%	0
South America	0%	0
TOTAL		141

Thank you