

NeuPSIG International Congress on Neuropathic Pain

Lisbon, Portugal, September 2023

Workshop: **“‘Sciatica’: neuropathic or not and does it matter? Outcomes from a NeuPSIG working group”**

Presenter: Ass/Prof Annina Schmid, Christine Price, Professor Helen Slater, Hon.Prof Brigitte Tampin

Description of Workshop

Pain radiating from the spine into the leg is commonly referred to as ‘sciatica’. ‘Sciatica’ is associated with reduced quality of life, significant suffering and socio-economic burden. Two of the main challenges associated with a diagnosis of ‘sciatica’ relate to the inconsistent use of terminology for the diagnostic labels ‘sciatica’/radicular pain/painful radiculopathy, and the identification of neuropathic pain. These challenges hinder collective clinical and scientific understanding and clarity regarding these conditions, impact effective clinical communication and care planning, prevent clear interpretation of the scientific literature related to the condition, and ultimately may contribute to the limited efficacy and personalisation of care for people living with ‘sciatica’.

In this workshop, we will highlight these challenges from a clinical, research and lived experience perspective. We will summarise the outcome of a working group commissioned by the Neuropathic Pain Special Interest Group (NeuPSIG) of the International Association for the Study of Pain which includes recommendations on the terminology as well as an adaptation of the neuropathic pain grading system in the context of spine-related leg pain. These recommendations will facilitate common language in clinical practice and research and assist the initiation of more specific management for this patient population.

Presentation Brigitte Tampin

Identification of neuropathic pain in spine-related leg pain – application of the adapted neuropathic pain grading system

Presentation Description

The identification of neuropathic pain in persons with spine-related leg pain is important as this information guides treatment and management, including self-management. The NeuPSIG neuropathic pain grading system was developed to assist clinicians and researchers in determining whether patients have neuropathic pain and the level of confidence associated with that decision. Based on clinical and laboratory examination findings, patients are classified as having no neuropathic pain, possible, probable or definite neuropathic pain. Whereas this grading system works nicely in people with systemic neuropathies where sensory findings and diagnostic tests are mostly present, its application in patients with spine-related leg pain, particular in radicular pain, can be challenging. For example, in the absence of sensory changes and MRI findings, patients with radicular pain

would at best reach a classification of possible neuropathic pain according to the current neuropathic pain grading system.

In this presentation I will explain the adaptations to the neuropathic pain grading system for spine-related leg pain recommended by the NeuPSIG working group. I will demonstrate its application in clinical practice using case studies and provide clarity for how the system can be incorporated in clinical trials. This will be an interactive session with audience participation.