

1. Abstract

Chronic pain (CP) is widespread in the adult population and most counsellors and psychotherapists will see clients who suffer from some degree of long-term pain. While relationship has widely been reported as a common factor of change across psychotherapy research, few studies have explored how therapeutic relationship helps CP clients. Literature reviewed found few studies linked to longer-term therapeutic relationships. Quantitative research, while influential for policy decisions, generalised effectiveness of treatment and techniques, and missed the voice of CP sufferers.

This study contributes to qualitative studies of the CP population, using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis - IPA (Larkin et al., 2012) to interpret and discuss experiences shared by three participants. As trained or trainee integrative psychotherapists, all those recruited had experienced over 100 hours of relational developmental psychotherapy, sharing their informed perspectives of being a client and living with CP in semi-structured interviews. Word-link diagrams provided an additional, more immediate way to record words and phrases describing experience of 'pain' and the 'therapeutic relationship' (See *cover and insert*).

Using IPA, data analysis extracted themes of 'Hiding the pain experience' and 'Waiting to be found: needs noticed and missed'. These were discussed in the context of previous research, highlighting experience of loneliness, fear and shame, a complex relationship to autonomy, and a hope that their therapists may respect this, and manage their own fears around pain.