

Saturday October 25, 2013

### The pain of endometriosis a “mystery” to women who suffer

Women who experience ongoing pain related to endometriosis and menstruation have far higher levels of clinical depression and anxiety than women without chronic pelvic pain, a meeting of pain specialists will hear today.

Dr Christina Bryant from the school of psychological sciences at the University of Melbourne will tell the Faculty of Pain (FPM) spring meeting “Internal Pain is not Eternal Pain” in NSW this weekend that chronic pelvic pain in women was a common but poorly understood and under-researched condition.

Dr Bryant and her team studied 31 women who all suffered from chronic pelvic pain (pain experienced for at least three – six months) and found the average duration of their pain was 8.8 years.

The study also found that 86 per cent of the women, whose average was 36.4 years, suffered from clinical anxiety related to their condition and 46 per cent were clinically depressed due to their pain. Sixty-eight per cent had suffered pain-related stress in the past 12 months.

Less than half were in paid employment.

“The women in this study perceived their pain to be “a mystery” and felt little control over their symptoms,” Dr Bryant said.

This sense of lack of control over their pain had a significant effect on their mood and their day-to-day functioning, causing high levels of distress.

“We set out to study the women’s own perception of their illness, an area that has not been looked at before in Australia.”

She said endometriosis, a condition where the lining of the uterus grows and flourishes outside the uterine cavity was the most common cause of severe pelvic pain in women. But often the causes of the pain are not fully understood. The condition is also associated with bladder and bowel problems.

“Women had a strong belief the pain would be chronic, would not respond to treatment and would affect their relationships.”

Dr Bryant said better understanding of symptoms and earlier treatment and intervention could help reduce the psychologically debilitating effects of chronic pelvic pain. Women who had a sense of control over their symptoms would reduce anxiety and improve well-being.

“This understanding is important for clinicians who are treating women with these conditions and has a direct effect on their quality of life.”

**For further information or to interview Dr Bryant please contact ANZCA Media Manager Ebru Yaman on +61 3 8517 5303, +61 408 259 369 or email [eyaman@anzca.edu.au](mailto:eyaman@anzca.edu.au). Follow us on Twitter [@ANZCA](https://twitter.com/ANZCA)**