

Fibromyalgia pain may cause memory blips

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The chronic pain from Fibromyalgia is devastating, but the suffering doesn't end there. According to a new study by the University of Alberta's Bruce Dick, people with the disease may have disruption in their memory because of the pain.

Dick, a professor in anesthesiology and pain medicine, compared 30 women with Fibromyalgia with 30 healthy women. In the first test, Dick and his colleagues had his subjects perform simple tasks such as reading a map or using a phone book. They got the bulk of their results in the second test when researchers looked at how much information the subjects could handle and whether multi-tasking was particularly difficult.

"We found that the Fibromyalgia sufferers had difficulty focusing on specific bits of information," said Dick. "The working memory was impaired and [as tasks] became more difficult mentally, people's performance dropped off quite dramatically if they had pain related to Fibromyalgia."

There are other factors that can cause cognitive disruption, including sleep problems and depression. Even with taking those factors into consideration, Dick found in his study that the subjects still had a slip in their working memory.

Dick believes his findings contribute to what Fibromyalgia sufferers call "fibro fog." They describe it as having trouble concentrating, suffering short-term memory loss and having general cognitive slowing.

The U of A researcher says he made another interesting and surprising discovery. Those

patients that were on narcotics or opiates had much better memories.

"The drugs that are really controversial actually seemed to help them be much more

functional," said Dick, who adds he wants medical professionals to consider his findings when they are prescribing something for pain.

"I think it is safe to say in the context of what we know in the research literature that when properly screened and supervised the benefits do outweigh the risks overall in using these medications."

Dick wants to further study the controversial treatments in order to address the best ways chronic pain sufferers can improve their memory skills.

"We need to more systematically study the drugs themselves and what they seem to do in

different groups of people and even in different classes of drugs."

Provided by University of Alberta

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