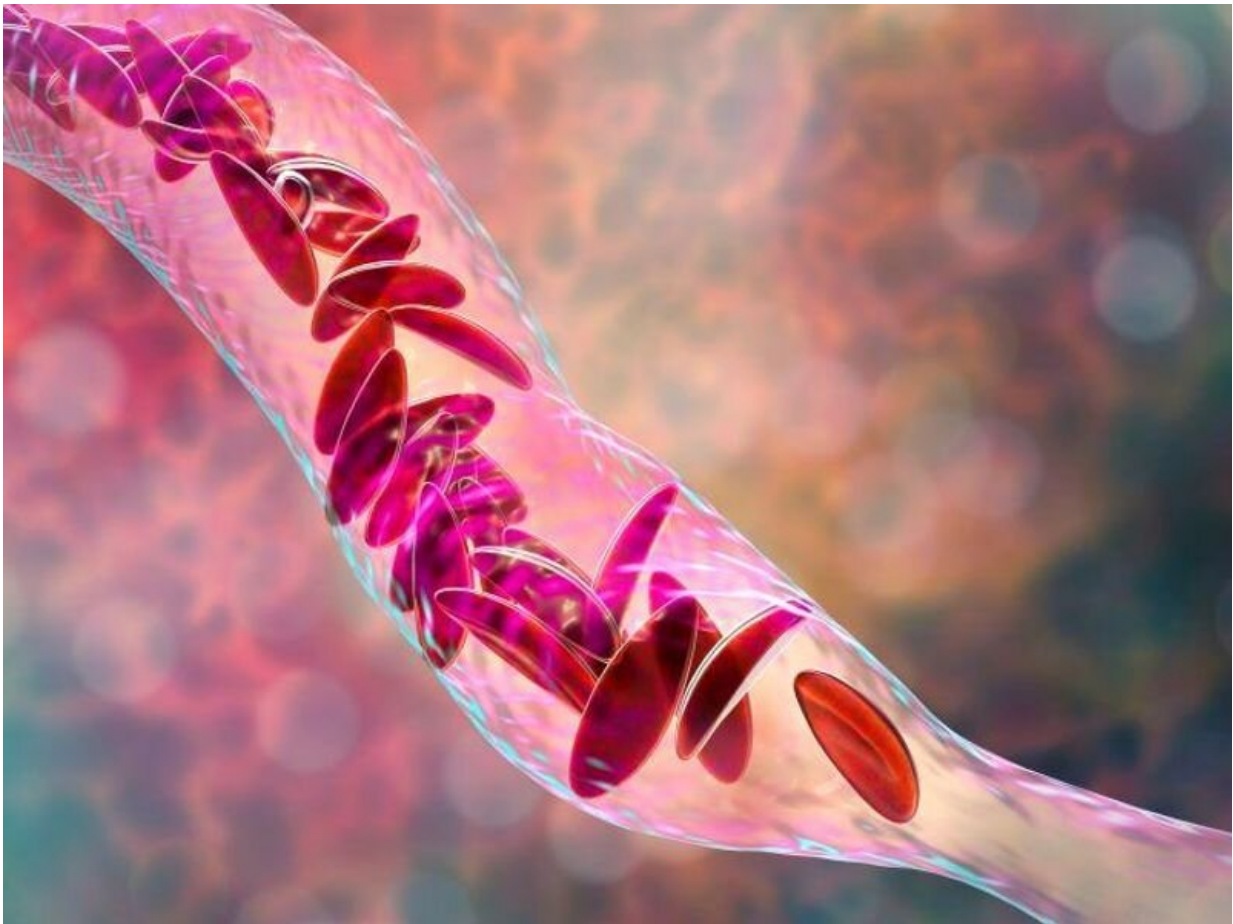


Study explores correlates of pain associated with sickle cell

May 19 2023, by Elana Gotkine



Correlates of pain associated with sickle cell disease (SCD) include

depression, age, sex, and employment status, according to a study published online May 18 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Kelly M. Harris, Ph.D., from the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, and colleagues examined the association of educational attainment, employment status, and [mental health](#) with pain episode frequency and severity in a cross-sectional analysis of data from 2,264 patients treated at eight sites of the U.S. Sickle Cell Disease Implementation Consortium.

Of the participants, 47.0 percent reported taking daily pain medication and 20.0 percent had a depression diagnosis; 79.8 percent reported [severe pain](#) and 47.8 percent reported more than four pain episodes in the previous 12 months. The researchers found that the mean pain frequency and severity *t* scores were 48.6 and 50.3, respectively, for the sample.

No associations were found for [educational attainment](#) and income with increased pain frequency or severity. Increased pain frequency was seen in association with unemployment and female sex. An inverse association was seen for age younger than 18 years with pain frequency and pain severity. There was an association noted for depression with increased pain frequency, but not severity. Hydroxyurea use was associated with increased pain severity, while daily use of pain medication was associated with increased pain frequency and severity.

"We cannot treat SCD-related pain with medications only; rather, we must begin to consider and incorporate holistic or comprehensive approaches to reducing pain," the authors write. "To do so, we must consider the full experiences of patients with SCD."

Two authors disclosed financial ties to the [pharmaceutical industry](#); one author disclosed ties to the publishing industry.

More information: Kelly M. Harris et al, Examining Mental Health, Education, Employment, and Pain in Sickle Cell Disease, *JAMA Network Open* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.14070](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.14070)

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