



Chronic Itch in Dermatologic Conditions is Associated With Greater Pain-Related Interference Despite Similar Pain Severity

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Background

- Itch is one of the most common and burdensome symptoms in dermatology and often coexists with pain across a wide range of skin diseases.
- Pain and itch are closely related sensations, with overlapping receptors and mediators.
- The interaction and potential synergistic effects of pain and itch on clinical symptom burden remains poorly understood.
- The purpose of this study was to evaluate whether pain severity and pain-related interference differ across patients with differing itch chronicity.

Methods

- Dermatology outpatients were administered a questionnaire that included the Chronic Graded Pain Scale Revised (CGPS-R) and assessed:
 - Presence of itch and pain
 - Itch duration
 - Pain severity
 - Pain-related interference with enjoyment of life
 - Pain-related interference in general activity
- Adults were stratified into **3 groups** based on itch duration:
 1. Itch for 12 weeks or less
 2. Itch for 13 to 54 weeks
 3. Itch for greater than 54 weeks
- Mean pain severity, mean impact on life enjoyment, and mean impact on daily activity were compared across the 3 groups.
- Two-tailed unpaired sample t-tests were performed to evaluate statistical significance

Results

- A total of 78 patients with itch ages 18-92 were enrolled in the study:
 - 15 patients in the ≤ 12 weeks group
 - 22 patients in the 13-54 weeks group
 - 41 patients in the >54 weeks group

Pain Severity Ratings by Itch Chronicity

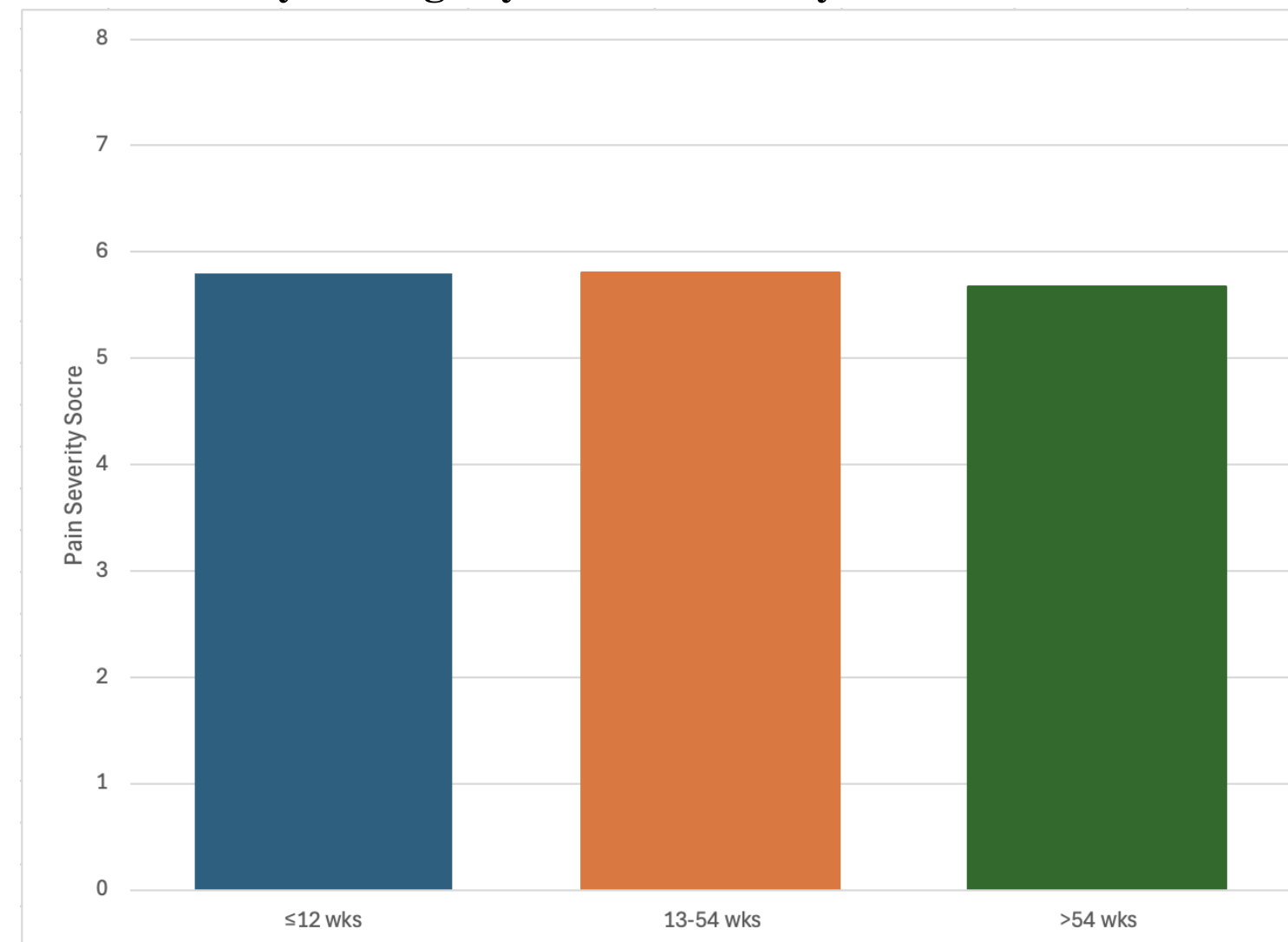


Figure 1. Pain severity ratings between the ≤ 12 weeks group, 13-54 weeks group, and >54 weeks group ($p = 0.984$)

Enjoyment and Activity Interference by Itch Chronicity

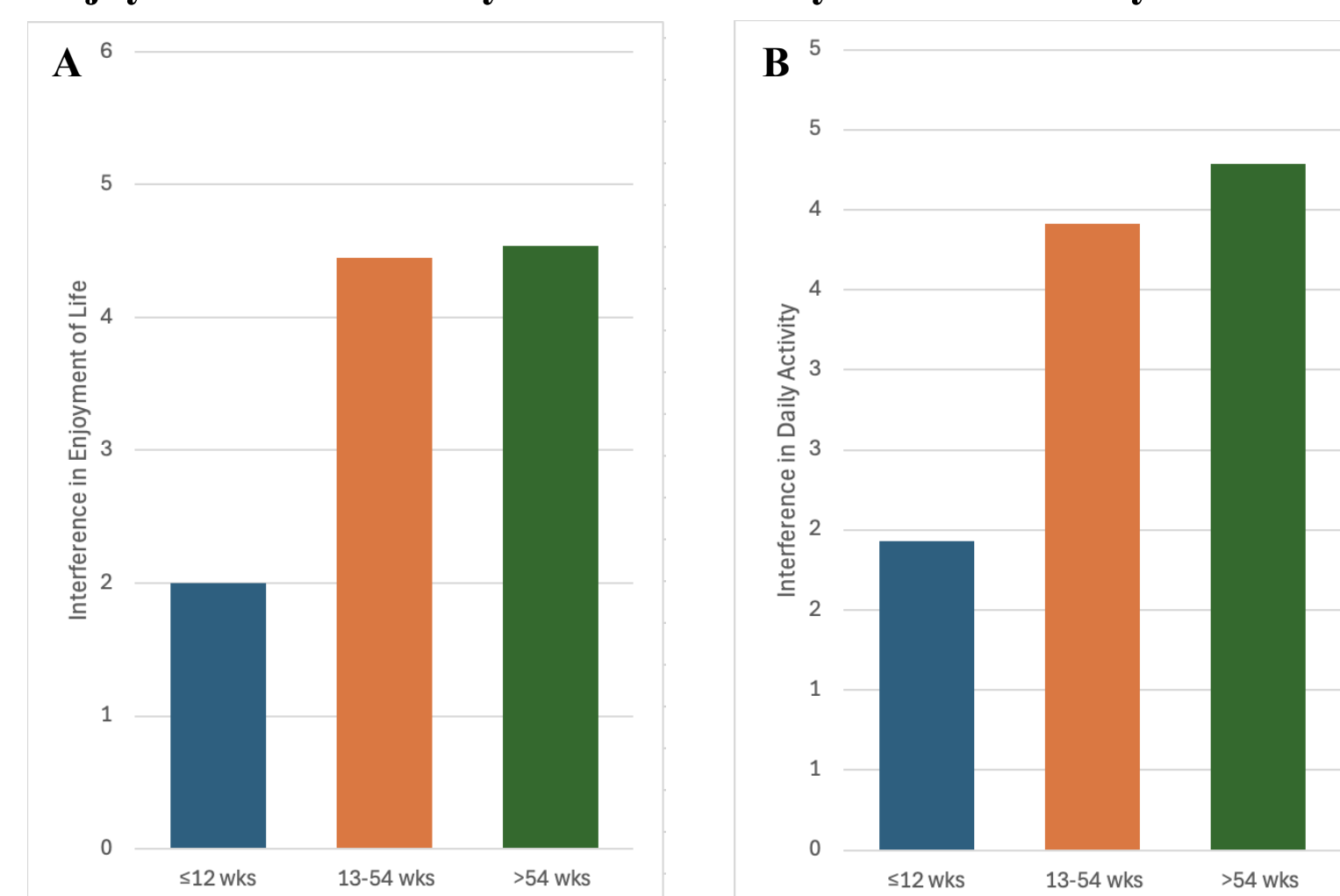


Figure 2. Interference in enjoyment in life (A) and daily activity (B) between the ≤ 12 weeks group, 13-54 weeks group, and >54 weeks group.

Results Cont.

- Mean pain severity between the ≤ 12 weeks group, 13-54 weeks group, and >54 weeks group was not significantly different: 5.80, 5.82, and 5.68 respectively. ($p = 0.984$) (**Fig. 1**)
- Mean interference with enjoyment of life between the ≤ 12 weeks group, 13-54 weeks group, and >54 weeks group was significantly less in the ≤ 12 weeks group: 2.00, 4.45, and 4.54 ($p < 0.05$) (**Fig. 2A**)
- Mean interference with daily activity between the ≤ 12 weeks group, 13-54 weeks group, and >54 weeks group was significantly less in the ≤ 12 weeks group: 1.93, 3.91, and 4.29 ($p < 0.05$) (**Fig. 2B**)
- Mean interference with enjoyment of life and mean interference in daily activity in the 13-54 weeks group and >54 weeks group did not significantly differ from each other.

Discussion

- These findings suggest that among dermatology patients who have concurrent itch and pain associated with their dermatologic conditions, itch duration that exceeds 12 weeks is associated with significantly greater functional burden, even when patients don't recognize a difference in pain severity.
- The discordance between pain intensity and pain interference may indicate that dermatologic conditions with chronic itch may be more disruptive to daily life than simple pain scales alone would suggest.
- Regular screening for quality-of-life impairment, in addition to symptom duration and intensity may be useful to guide more comprehensive symptom directed treatment strategies.

References

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