

People suffering from chronic pain complain of a reduction in their cognitive abilities. In the past, the medical community has often discounted the cognitive complaints of chronic pain patients. Through this research, we hope to establish whether this cognitive impairment exists in people with chronic pain and to determine whether some form of cognitive remediation can be considered as a treatment option in comprehensive pain management. There are two hypotheses: (1) participants with chronic pain will do significantly worse on cognitive tests than the given normative data and (2) participants randomized to the CBT group will show improved scores on the cognitive tests as compared to the control group at the completion of the intervention. To test these hypotheses, cognitive tests assessing executive functions, working memory, processing speed and encoding and retrieval of short-term memory were administered at two time points before and after cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) or an alternative educational materials intervention (control group). We examined the relationship between chronic pain and cognition, as well as the effects of CBT on cognitive ability in patients with chronic pain. Preliminary analyses indicate comparable performance of chronic pain patients and healthy controls. Objective evidence of a relationship between chronic pain and cognitive ability would help to validate patients' subjective cognitive complaints as well as provide an option for addressing these cognitive complaints with CBT.