



Patient Perceptions of and Experiences With Inadequate Post-surgical Acute Pain Management: A Qualitative Assessment



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BACKGROUND

- Pain after surgery is a common experience, reported by 80% of patients.¹ Among those patients reporting post-surgical pain, it is estimated 88% experience moderate, severe, or extreme pain levels.¹
- While some post-operative pain is part of the recovery process, the pain is often undertreated.² Inadequate management of acute post-operative pain may lead to negative clinical outcomes, including persistent chronic pain leading to reduced quality of life and productivity.^{1, 2}
- Pain management is further complicated by side effects related to analgesia, including opioids. Nearly 80% of patients taking opioids report experiencing side effects or adverse events, such as nausea, vomiting, and respiratory depression.¹ Adverse events have been shown to impact quality of life and increase costs of care by increasing hospital length of stay and readmission rates.¹
- Little evidence exists to understand the patient perspective of the consequences and challenges with managing poorly controlled surgical pain. Given the impact that inadequately managed post-surgical pain can have on patients and the healthcare system, it is important to better understand the patient experience of this condition.

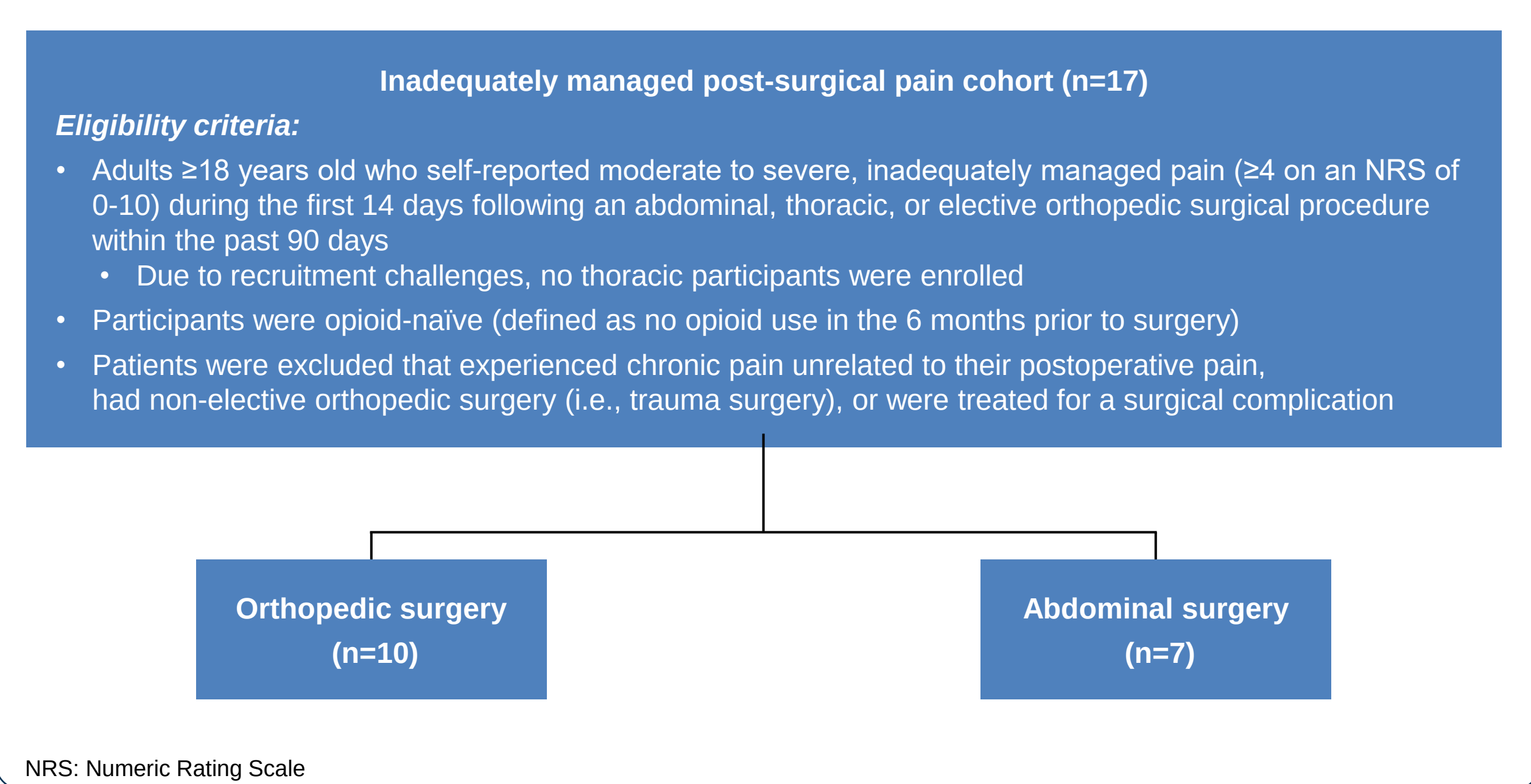
OBJECTIVES

- Examine the patient experience of inadequate acute post-surgical pain management, including the following:
- Descriptions of inadequately managed pain
 - Perspectives of the adequacy of prescription pain management therapies
 - Patient-reported impacts of inadequately managed pain on daily life

METHODS

- This study was a US-based, non-interventional, semi-structured, qualitative study of post-surgical patients; the study was deemed exempt by a central institutional review board
- Participants were interviewed within 24-90 days after their surgical procedure and all interviews were conducted in English; additional key inclusion and exclusion criteria are reported in **Figure 1**
- Study participants were recruited using purposive sampling through social media and existing patient panels

Figure 1: Study Population and Key Eligibility Criteria



- Each 60-minute, semi-structured individual interview was conducted by a trained qualitative researcher; interviews followed a study-specific guide that contained a mix of open-ended questions as well as additional follow-up questions based on participant responses
- Data Analysis**
- Transcripts were grouped chronologically by interview order into 4 sets for assessment of concept saturation; results of the analysis indicated that saturation was reached by the third set of interviews, confirming the sample size was sufficient to address the study objectives
- Data collected from interview transcripts were coded in NVivo qualitative analysis software using both inductive and deductive approaches
- Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify and explore key concepts concerning the relevant and important elements of patients' experiences with inadequate acute post-surgery pain management

RESULTS

Study Population

- Interviews were conducted with 17 adults with inadequately managed acute post-surgical pain (**Table 1**) between June and July 2023
- Interviews were conducted an average of 53 days post-surgery

Table 1. Patient Demographic & Clinical Characteristics

	n	%
Sex		
Female	14	82
Male	3	18
Surgery Type		
Elective Orthopedic	10	59
Abdominal	7	41
Race/Ethnicity		
White	10	59
Black or African American	3	18
Asian	2	12
Hispanic or Latino	2	12
Geographic Region		
Southeast (FL, GA, NC)	6	35
West (AZ, CA, WA)	4	24
Midwest (IL, WI)	3	18
Southwest (AK, TX)	3	18
Northeast (MA)	1	6
	Mean	Range
Age (years)	49.7	36-67
Approximate time since surgery (days)	52.8	24-80

- Elective orthopedic represented 59% of procedures (n=10 participants); abdominal surgery represented 41% (n=7) (**Figure 2**)
- Most participants had an inpatient procedure (n=12, 71%), with hospital stays ranging from overnight to 6 days

Figure 2: Distribution of surgery types included in the qualitative interviews

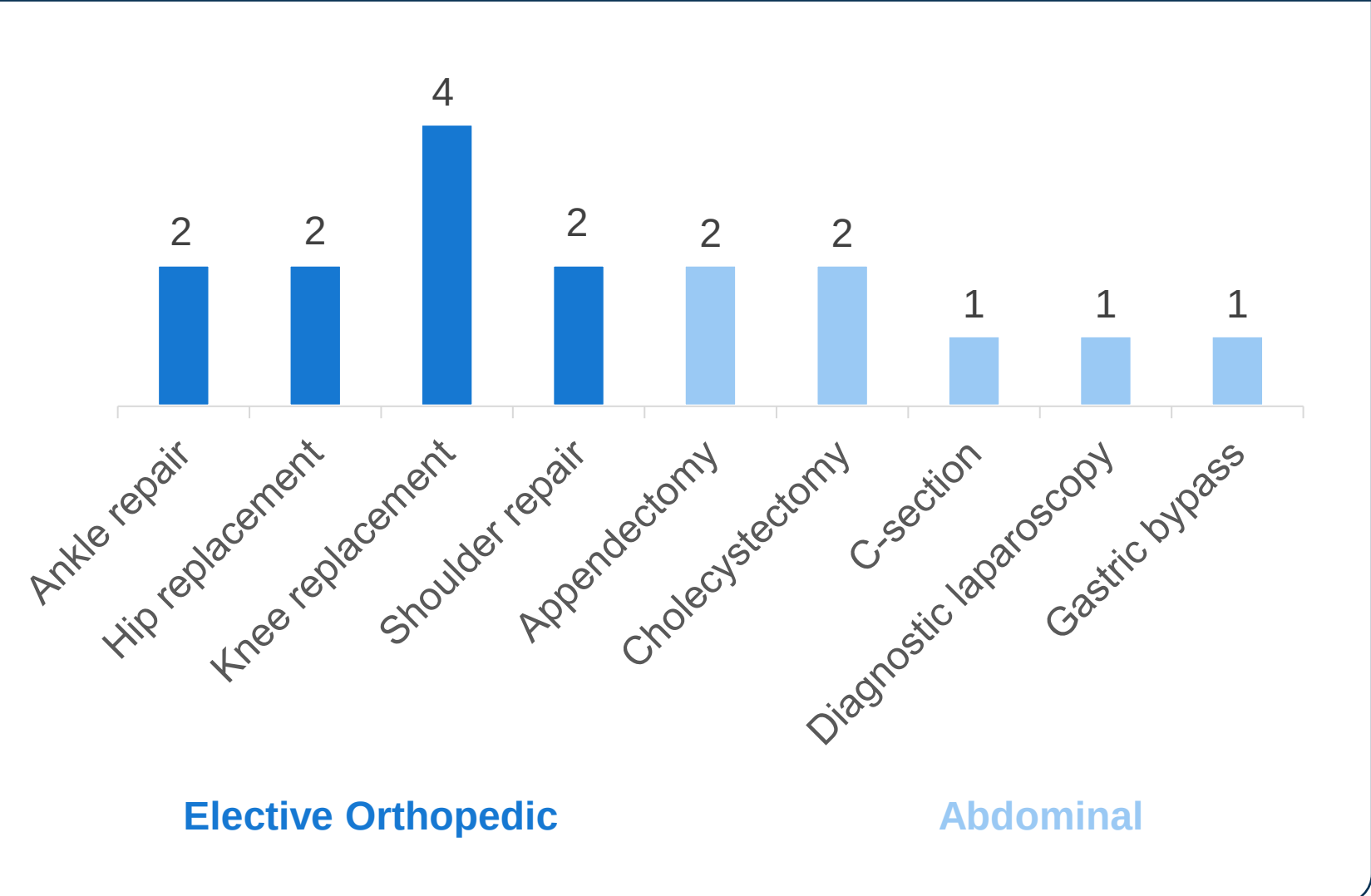
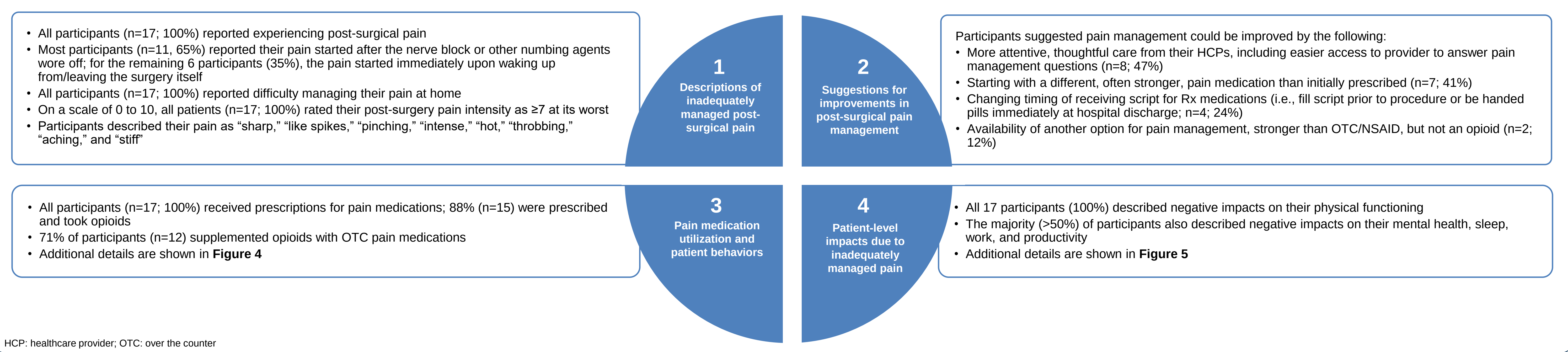


Figure 3: Key concepts and themes



HCP: healthcare provider; OTC: over the counter

Figure 4: Pain medication utilization and patient behaviors

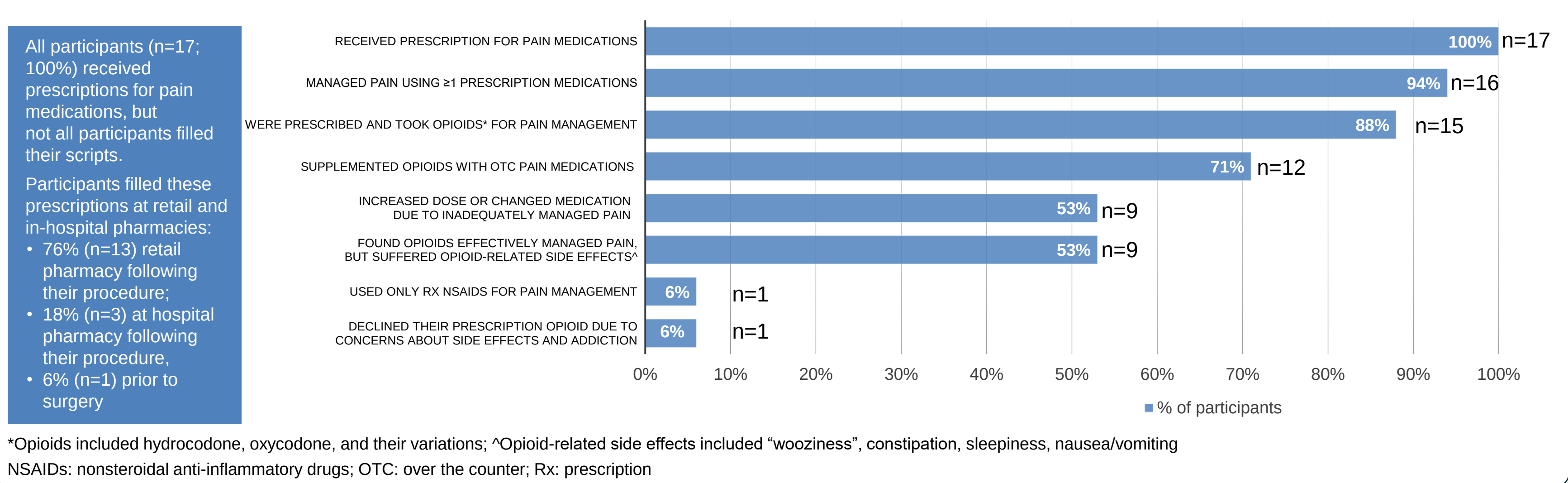


Figure 5: Patient-level impacts due to inadequately managed acute pain

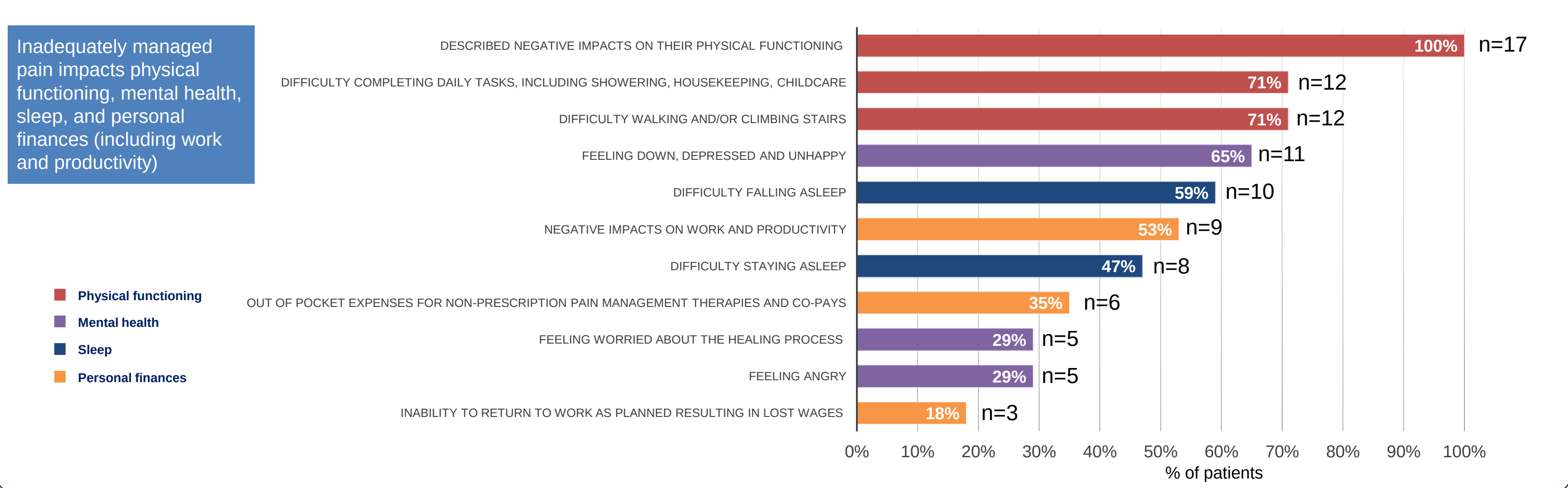


Figure 6: Representative quotes from participants describing inadequately managed pain and experiences with Rx medications



CONCLUSIONS

- Understanding how patients with inadequate pain management describe their pain, their experience with pain medications, and the negative impacts on their daily lives may help healthcare providers optimize the post-surgical recovery and better set expectations for post-surgical pain management.
- Additionally, understanding how patients describe limitations of current pain management therapies, including opioids, may help providers develop a patient-centric approach to post-surgical pain management.
- The themes identified in this study underscore the need for improved pain management therapies that address patient-reported unmet needs and preferences for pain management therapies.

REFERENCES

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AUTHOR DISCLOSURES

- VD** is a consultant to Pacira, Bioventus, Motive, and Medipost and has received honoraria from Pacira, Bioventus, Motive, and Sanara.
- Mo'C, EB, and LTW** are employees of QualityMetric.
- EG, SK, DR, YL, and AM** are employees of Vertex Pharmaceuticals and may own stock/stock options in the company.