

ANALYSIS OF THE CLINICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FRAIL PATIENTS WITH BREAKTHROUGH PAIN

J. Pérez-Cajaraville¹, S. Forcano-Sanjuan², G. Soler-González³, J.L. Firvida-Pérez⁴, C. Margarit-Ferri⁵, M.A. Vilar-Rodríguez⁶, N. Martínez-Banaclocha⁷, R. Afonso-Gómez⁸, J.A. Avellana-Zaragoza⁹, V. Casado-Echarren¹⁰, M. Delgado-Ureña¹¹, P. Guardia-Mancilla¹², O. Higuera-Gómez¹³, A. Oltra-Ferrando¹⁴, A.M. Sánchez¹⁵, G.M. Serrano-Montero¹⁶, J. Arranz-Durán¹⁷, M.G. Pazos-González¹⁸, A. Tuca-Rodríguez¹⁹, J.I. Calvo-Sáez²⁰, R.D. García-Marrero²¹, P. Pimentel-Cáceres²², J.A. Díaz-Ricós²³, E. Cabrera-Espínos²⁴, A. Martín-Pérez²⁵, I. Díaz-de-Corcuera-Frutos²⁶, B. Montalbán-Moreno²⁷, J.A. Núñez-Sobrino²⁸, L. Teijeira-Sánchez²⁹, A.J. Jiménez-López³⁰, A. Cabezón-Álvarez³⁰, I. Huerta-González³⁰, B. Soler-López³¹

¹Hospital Universitario HM Puerta del Sur, Unidad del Dolor, Madrid, Spain; ²Hospital Universitario y Politécnico La Fe, Servicio de Geriátria, Valencia, Spain; ³Instituto Catalá d'Oncologia L'Hospitalet, Servicio de Oncología Médica, Hospitalet de Llobregat, Barcelona, Spain; ⁴COSAGA Ourense, Oncología Médica, Ourense, Spain; ⁵Hospital General Universitario de Alicante, Unidad del Dolor, Alicante, Spain; ⁶COSAGA Ourense, Unidad del Dolor, Ourense, Spain; ⁷Hospital General Universitario de Alicante, Oncología Médica, Alicante, Spain; ⁸Hospital Universitario Nuestra Señora Candelaria, Oncología Médica, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain; ⁹Hospital Universitario de la Ribera, Geriátria, Alzira, Spain; ¹⁰Fundación Jiménez Díaz, Oncología Médica, Madrid, Spain; ¹¹Hospital Universitario San Cecilio, Cuidados Paliativos, Granada, Spain; ¹²Hospital Universitario La Paz, Oncología Médica, Madrid, Spain; ¹³Hospital Virgen de los Lirios, Oncología Médica, Alcoi, Spain; ¹⁴Hospital Sont Llatzer, Oncología Médica, Palma de Mallorca, Spain; ¹⁵Hospital Universitario Infanta Leonor, Oncología Médica, Madrid, Spain; ¹⁶Hospital Universitario Nuestra Señora Candelaria, Unidad del Dolor, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain; ¹⁷Complejo Hospitalario Universitario A Coruña, Oncología Médica, A Coruña, Spain; ¹⁸Hospital Clínic Provincial, Cuidados Paliativos, Barcelona, Spain; ¹⁹Complejo Hospitalario de Navarra, Unidad del Dolor, Pamplona, Spain; ²⁰Hospital Universitario de Canarias, Oncología Médica, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain; ²¹Hospital General Universitario Santa Lucía, Oncología Médica, Cartagena, Spain; ²²Hospital Universitario Doctor Peset, Unidad de Hospitalización a domicilio, Valencia, Spain; ²³Hospital Arnau de Vilanova de Valencia, Oncología Médica, Valencia, Spain; ²⁴Hospital Universitari Vall d'Hebrón, Cuidados Paliativos, Barcelona, Spain; ²⁵Hospital de Galdakano, Oncología Médica, Bilbao, Spain; ²⁶Hospital Universitario 12 de Octubre, Anestesiología y Reanimación - Unidad de dolor, Madrid, Spain; ²⁷Hospital Universitario 12 de Octubre, Oncología Médica, Madrid, Spain; ²⁸Complejo Hospitalario de Navarra/IdisNa, Oncología Médica, Pamplona, Spain; ²⁹Kyowa Kirin Farmacéutica, S.L.U., Departamento médico, Madrid, Spain; ³⁰E-C-BIO, S.L., Departamento médico, Las Rozas (Madrid), Spain.

Background and aims

Frailty is a complex situation, characterized by a deterioration of multiple physiological systems. The appearance of breakthrough pain (BTP) in frail patients has a significant impact on their quality of life (QOL).

The aim of the study was to analyze the clinical and social characteristics of frail patients with BTP and how is affected their quality of life.

As secondary objective the treatments prescribed to frail patients for the treatment of pain and BTP were analyzed.

Methods

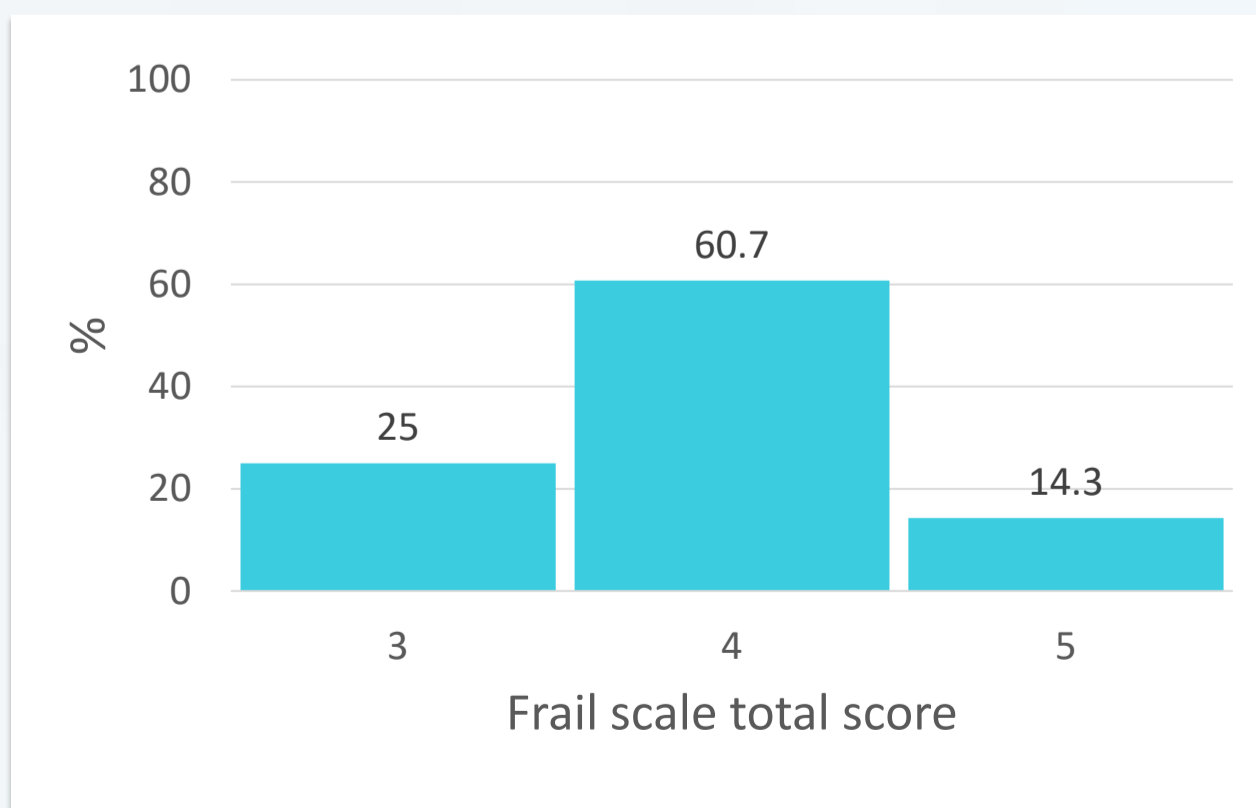
A cross-sectional, observational, multicentre study was conducted, involving frail adult patients (Frail scale score ≥ 3), with adequately controlled background pain and diagnosis of BTP.

The socio-demographic characteristics, socio-family assessment (Gijón scale), Karnofsky Performance Status, comorbidities, QOL (EuroQoL-5D-5L) and characteristics of chronic pain and BTP and treatments administered in usual clinical practice were recorded.

Table 1. Sociodemographic and Clinical characteristics.

	% (n) or mean (95%CI)	
Age	68 (IC95% 66.5-69.7)	
Sex	Male	58.5 (134)
	Female	41.5 (95)
Race	White	79 (181)
	Hispanic	20.5 (47)
	Black	0.4 (1)
Gijón scale	Global score (0-20)	4.9 (4.5-5.3)
	Without socio-familiar risk (<16)	99.6 (228)
	With socio-familiar risk (≥ 16)	0.4 (1)
Oncologic patient	No	7.1 (17)
	Yes	92.9 (222)
Time from cancer diagnosis (months)	32.1 (26.5-37.7)	
Primary cancer (n=221)	Lung	33 (73)
	Digestive	23.5 (52)
	Breast	7.2 (16)
	Prostate	5 (11)
	Other	31.2 (69)
Body mass index (kg/m ²)	25.1 (24.5-25.7)	
Karnofsky functional performance	63.3 (61.1-65.4)	

Figure 1. Proportion of patients by Frail scale total score.



Results

A total of 240 patients were included. Sociodemographic and clinical characteristics are described in **Table 1**. Most patients were oncologic (92.9%; n = 222).

The mean Frail scale score was 3.9 points (95%CI 3.8-4). The proportion of patients classified by Frail scale score are shown in **Figure 1**.

Cancer was the main cause of the background pain in 83.1% (n=192).

The characteristics of BTP are described in **Table 2**.

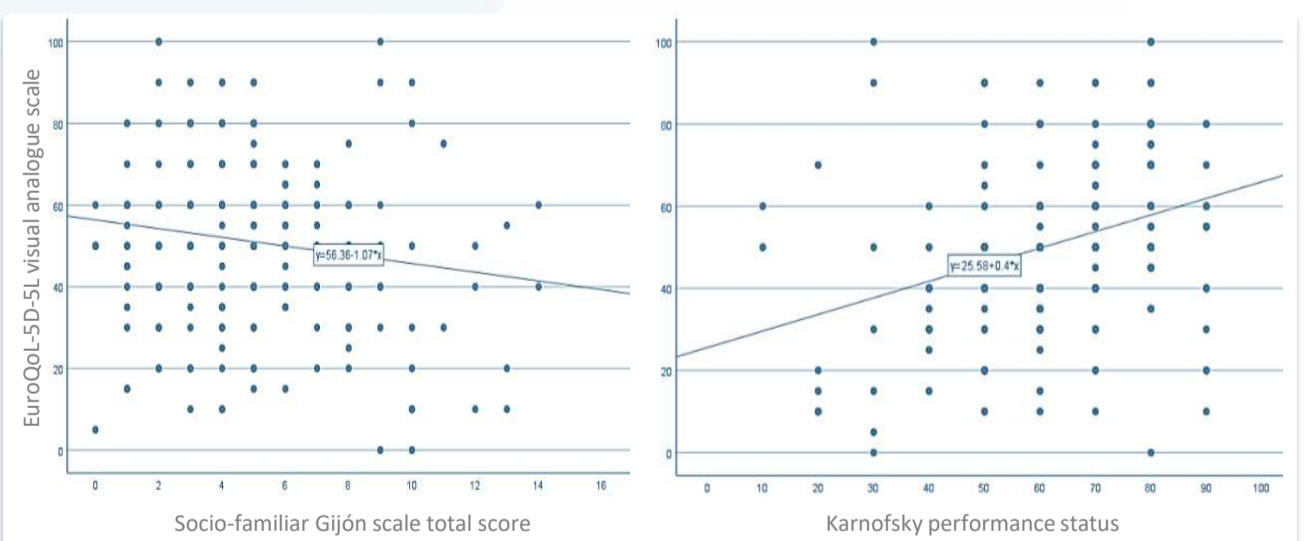
The mean EuroQoL-5D-5L visual analogue scale (VAS) score was 51.1 (95%CI 48.4-53.8). In the multivariate analysis the VAS score was related to Gijón scale total score (p=0.045) and Karnofsky (p<0.0001) in oncologic patients (**Figure 2**), independently of age, sex, body mass index, Frail score, naïve BTP and time from cancer diagnosis.

Opioids were mainly (89.2%) the treatment of choice for BTP: 69.5% (n=155) fentanyl, 13.9% (n=31) morphine, 4% (n=9) metamizole, 4% (n=9) paracetamol, 2.7% (n=6) oxycodone, 2.7% (n=6) tramadol. Mean daily doses administered in these drugs for BTP were like those administered in non-frail patients.

Table 2. Breakthrough pain characteristics.

	% (n) or mean (95%CI)	
Number of episodes/day	3.8 (3.3-4.3)	
Duration of episodes (minutes)	34.1 (28.5-39.6)	
Location	Lumbar	31.6 (73)
	Abdominal	21.6 (50)
	Thoracic	20.3 (47)
	Head	10.8 (25)
	Other	15.6 (36)
Initiation	Gradual	55 (127)
	Sudden	45 (104)
Intensity	Mild	3 (7)
	Moderate	33.8 (78)
	Severe	45.9 (106)
	Excruciating	17.3 (40)
Incidental	No	51.3 (118)
	Yes	48.7 (112)
Predictable	No	65.4 (151)
	Yes	34.6 (80)
Daytime	In the night	12.6 (29)
	During the day	38.5 (89)
Type of pain	Unrelated	48.9 (113)
	Somatic	25.4 (61)
	Visceral	22.9 (55)
	Neuropathic	15.8 (38)
	Mixed	32.1 (77)

Figure 2. EuroQoL-5D-5L visual analogue scale relationships in oncologic patients.



Conclusions

- This is the first study describing the clinical characteristics of frail patients with BTP.
- BTP characteristics and treatments administered for BTP did not differ from those described in non-frail patients.

Keywords Breakthrough pain; cancer; frailty.

Study sponsored by



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