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IMPROVING THE DIAGNOSIS OF FIBROMYALGIA (FM) IN EUROPE: IDENTIFICATION OF FACTORS THAT AID IN THE DETECTION OF FM

E. Serra¹, S. Perrot², I. Guillemin³, C. Dias Barbosa³, B. Arnould³, R. Baron⁴

¹Pain Unit, CHU Nord, Amiens, ²Internal Department and Pain Unit, Hôpital Hôtel Dieu, Paris, ³Mapi Values, Lyon, France,

⁴Department of Neurological Pain Research and Therapy, Department of Neurology, Christian-Albrechts University, Kiel, Germany

Aim: Prior to facing the challenges of FM management, an initial diagnosis must be made. To guide general practitioners (GPs) in the early detection of FM in Europe, we developed an easy-to-use screening tool specific to FM.

Method: A European multidisciplinary expert group was constituted with the aim of providing clinical expertise, defining methodology, and identifying key issues around the detection of FM. Three conceptual models describing factors that may contribute to the identification of FM patients were derived from; a) a comprehensive literature review, 2) clinician focus groups (N=6), and 3) face-to-face interviews with German, French, and English-speaking patients (N=29) conducted by psychologists to explore their attitudes and perceptions of the disease. A FM screening tool was developed in all three languages and tested for comprehension and applicability in FM-diagnosed and FM-suspected patients.

Results: The models derived from the literature, clinician focus groups, and FM patient interviews showed high consistency. The resulting FM screening tool is comprised of 14 questions that describe patients' pain, fatigue, associated symptoms, impact on everyday life, personal history, and attitudes towards their FM.

Conclusion: Based on this qualitative study, the detection of FM is likely to require the assessment of multiple psychological factors in addition to symptoms, including patient reporting of personal history and patient behaviour. The quantitative validation of these findings is currently underway.