

The challenges of managing Complex Regional Pain Syndrome throughout the care pathway – reporting therapists' perspectives

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Background and Aims

Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) is a severe chronic condition which usually occurs following limb trauma.

Most patients in England are seen in physiotherapy, occupational therapy or hand therapy services in local hospitals or the community.



England has a small number of specialist CRPS centres, but access is limited.



Aim: to gain better understanding of therapists' knowledge and practices for CRPS in the community therapy practices for CRPS in the community and secondary care.

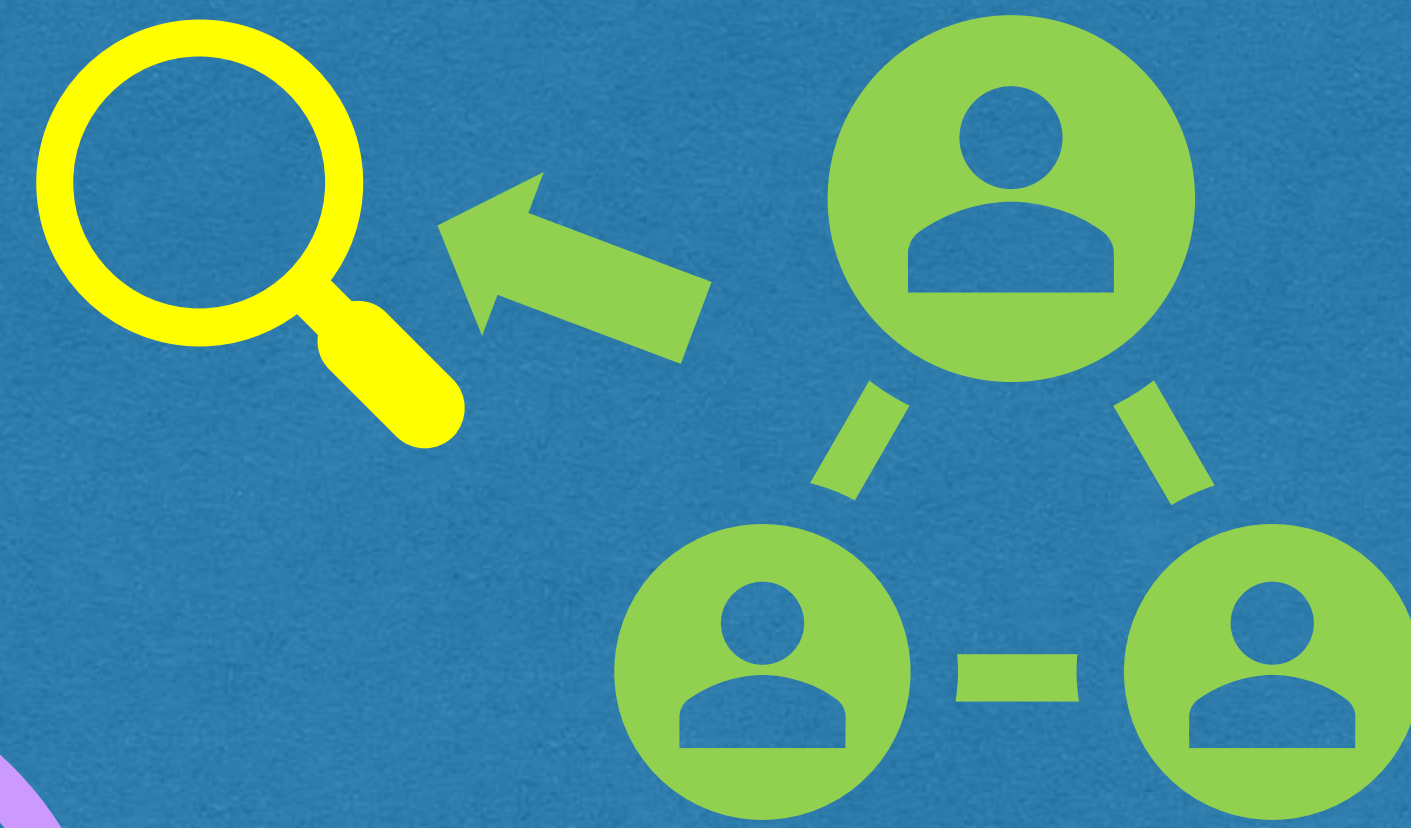


Methods

Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists and Hand therapists who work with, or have worked with, people with CRPS in England were invited to participate in an electronic survey between Oct and Dec 2021.

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92% of therapists reported seeing no more than 2 CRPS cases per month



Only 32% reported having a defined CRPS management pathway



68% were aware of guidelines for the management of CRPS

Therapists reported referring on to...

Regional CRPS centre 15%

National CRPS specialist centre 17%

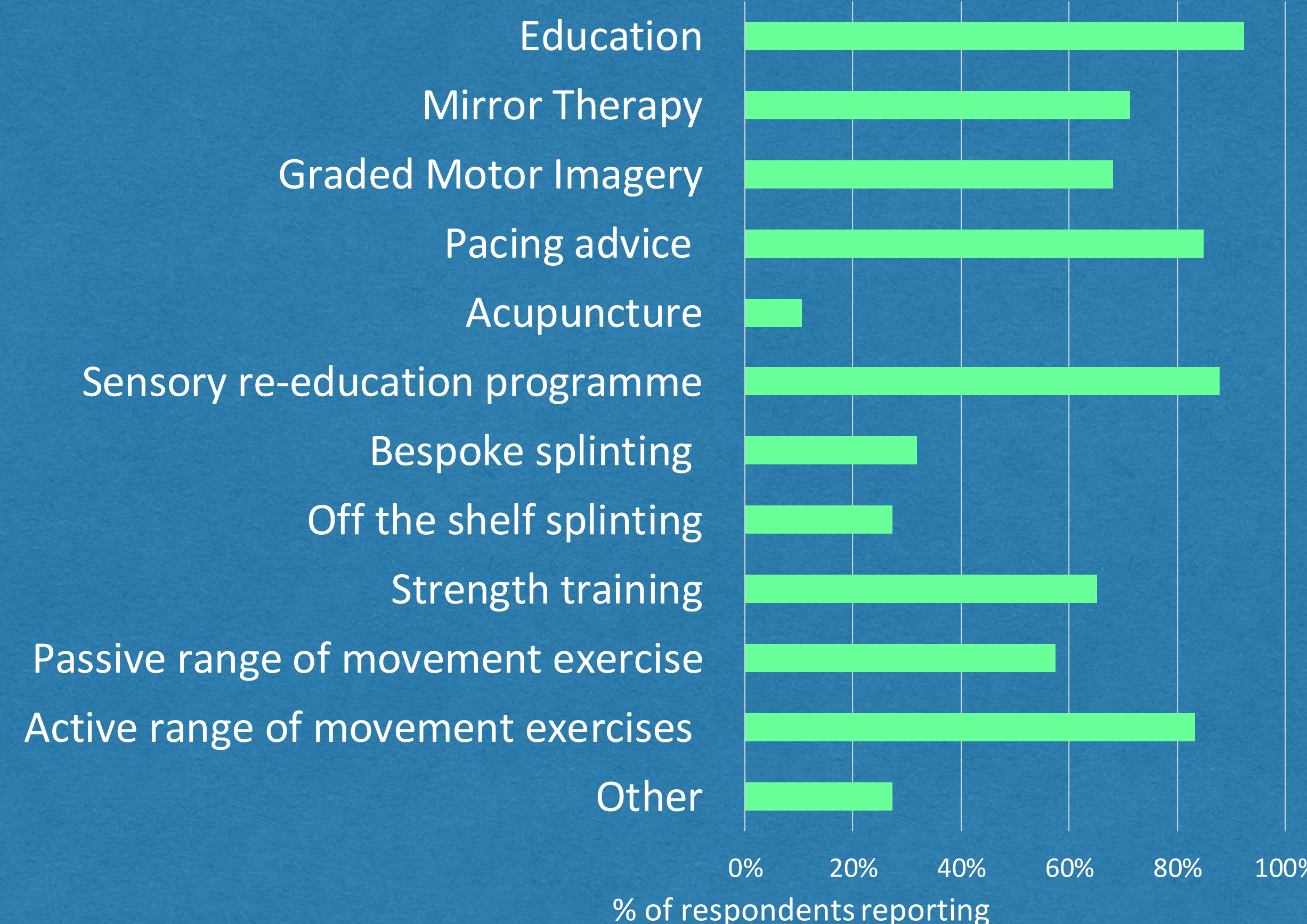
Results

77 participants

Hand therapist (8%)
Occupational therapist (19%)
Physiotherapist (56%)
Hand AND occupational therapist (10%)
Hand and physiotherapist (7%)

Specialist hand unit (34%)
Specialist pain clinic (23%)
General outpatients (14%)
Small units/private practice (5%)

Reported CRPS management plans used in secondary/community care in England



Over half (55%) of training received was informal

How much do you know about CRPS?
25% "A lot"
60% "A moderate amount"
8% "A great deal"

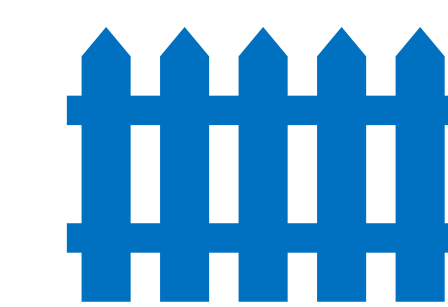


77% of therapists were confident in describing CRPS to patients

BUT

14% of therapists were not confident in diagnosing CRPS

Free-text responses:



Perceived barriers to CRPS management

- Delayed diagnosis
- Lack of appointment slots
- Low staff numbers
- Lack of experience & knowledge among other healthcare professionals

Perceived facilitators to CRPS management



- Education provision
- Awareness of treatment options
- Good communication
- Early diagnosis and intervention
- Ability to refer

Conclusion

- This survey specifically targeted therapists working with, or who had worked with, people with CRPS, therefore a high level of knowledge was unsurprising.
- The data indicated an unmet need in terms of formal education and training, alongside systemic barriers that hinder CRPS referral and care.



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