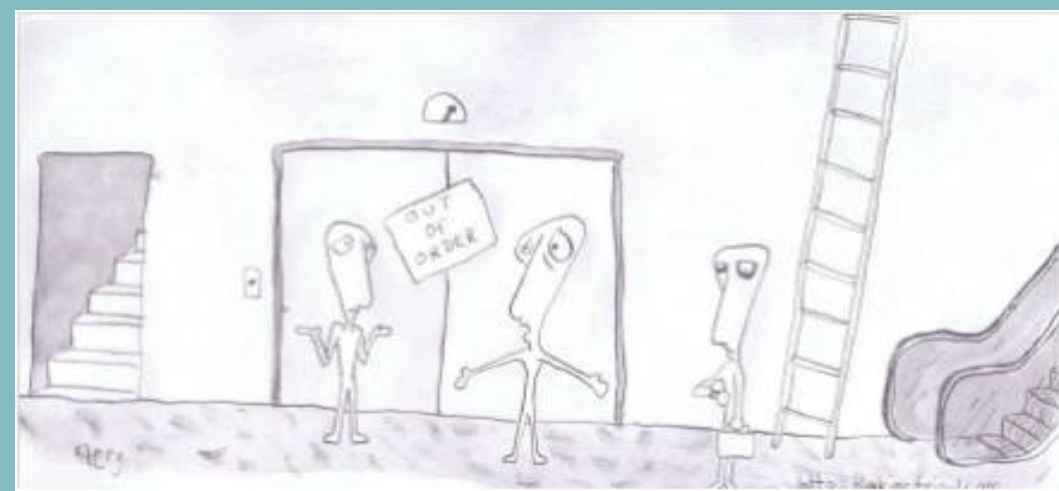


Introduction

- Individuals with chronic pain often find their lives narrowly defined by pain and the pursuit of pain elimination.
- Frequently individuals neglect meaningful life activities, placing life "on hold" until total pain relief is achieved.
- Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) focuses on accepting unpleasant experiences while increasing engagement in value-oriented life activities.



Objectives

- To determine the effects of a brief group ACT intervention for patients with chronic, non-malignant pain on measures of pain, mindfulness, acceptance and depression.
- It was hypothesized that engagement in life activities and willingness to experience pain would increase as a result of treatment.

Methods

Participants

- Seventeen female patients (mean age = 46 ± 13.52) experiencing nonmalignant chronic pain of more than 6 months duration completed six 90 minute group sessions.
- Participants were referred from surgical and medical subspecialties at the Medical University of South Carolina

Research Design

- Patients were assessed initially (session 1) and upon completion (session 6) of therapy using the:
 - Center for Epidemiologic Studies Short Depression Scale (CES-D 10),
 - Chronic Pain Acceptance Questionnaire (CPAQ), Activity Engagement and Pain Willingness subscales
 - Brief Pain Inventory (BPI)
 - Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI)
- Questionnaires were scored individually and average scores obtained at the beginning and completion of treatment.

Results

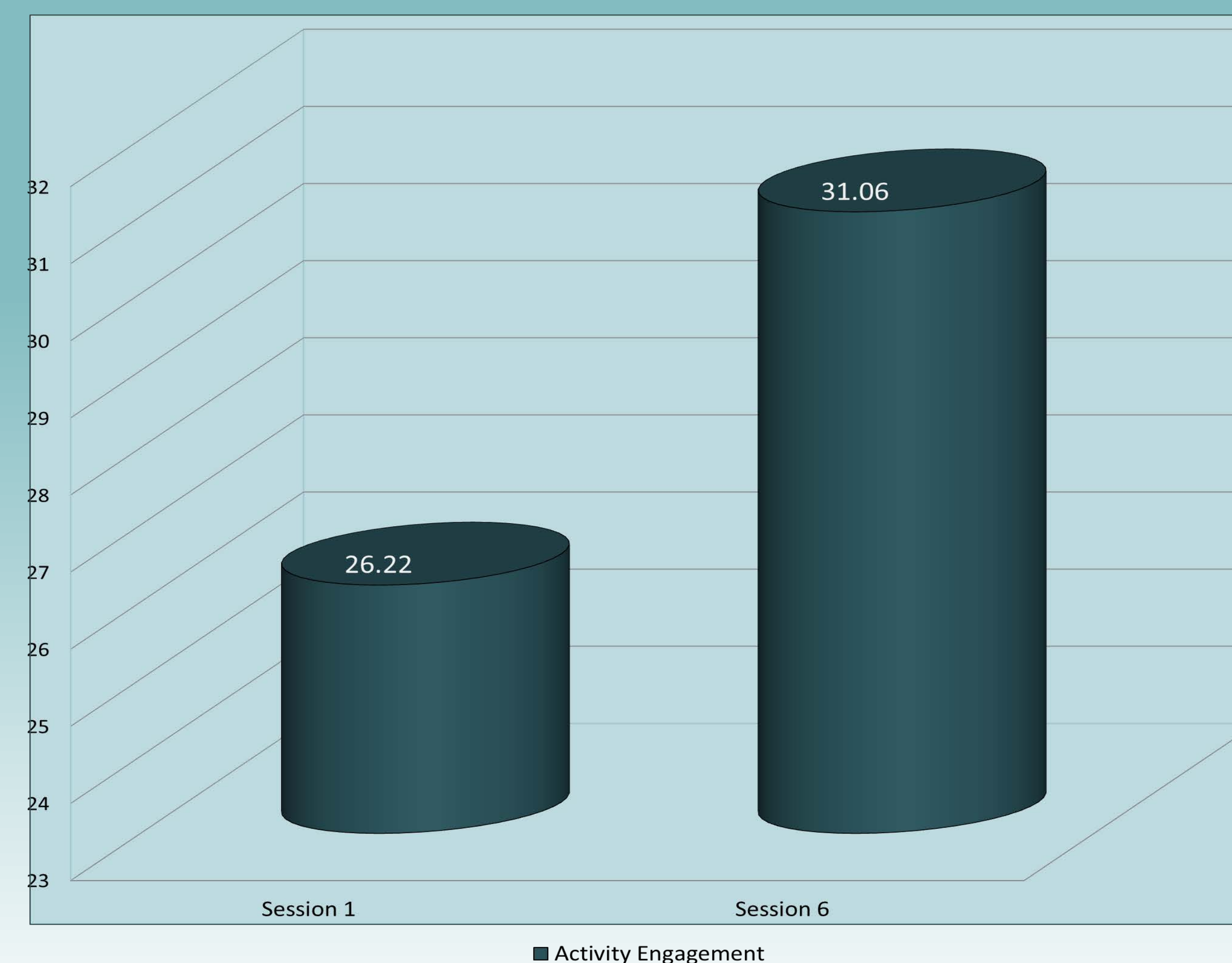
- Session 1 and Session 6 scores were compared using independent samples t-tests.
- All measures showed change in the anticipated direction from session 1 to session 6, though changes in depression, mindfulness, pain, and willingness were not statistically significant (see Table 1).

Table 1. Session 1 and Session 6 scores

Measure	Session 1 Mean	Session 1 SD	Session 6 Mean	Session 6 SD	T-score	p
CES-D (Depression)	16.72	8.28	15.76	7.40	0.565	0.580
FMITOT (Mindfulness)	34.88	6.32	36.76	7.51	-1.319	0.206
BPI (Pain)	6.35	1.71	5.91	1.87	1.553	0.141
CPA QW (Pain Willingness)	16.00	0.41	19.24	8.77	-1.396	0.182
CPA QE (Activity Engagement)	26.23	14.57	31.06	12.90	-2.272	0.037

- There was a significant difference in the scores for Activity Engagement at Session 1 ($M=23.23$, $SD=14.57$) and Session 6 ($M=31.06$, $SD=12.90$), such that Activity Engagement increased significantly across the course of the intervention; $t(16)=-2.272$, $p = 0.037$

Change in Activity Engagement Scores from Session 1 to Session 6



Conclusions

- These findings suggest that for patients with chronic pain ACT group therapy is an effective means of increasing engagement in life activities as measured by the Chronic Pain Acceptance Questionnaire (CPAQ) even in the absence of significant improvement in pain itself.
- Considering that attempts to eradicate chronic pain are often unsuccessful and that chronic pain sufferers frequently neglect day-to-day activities, ACT group therapy provides a means to transition from waiting for life to begin *after* chronic pain to engaging in a meaningful life *with* pain.

Limitations

- Sample was all female
- No control group
- Small sample size

Future Directions

- These findings add to the growing body of literature demonstrating the importance of acceptance and values-related processes in relation to chronic pain.
- Future research to evaluate longer-term effects of increased engagement on functioning and quality of life.



References

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CONTACT INFORMATION

- Lauren M Baras, MD [email](mailto:baras@musc.edu): baras@musc.edu
- Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, SC 29425