

`One in five live with chronic pain`

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One in five Europeans are living in often agonising pain, with 15 million considering suicide, a study has claimed.

Across Europe, chronic pain was said to account for nearly 500 million lost working days a year - costing the European economy 34 billion euros (£24 billion).

The Pain in Europe study, unveiled as part of European Week Against Pain, found that 75 million pain sufferers lived in often agonising pain for more than seven years.

But the authors of the report said a fifth of sufferers endured agony for 20 years or more without getting the relief they needed. As a result, 21% of pain sufferers were diagnosed with depression.

More than one in six chronic pain sufferers said they felt their pain was sometimes so bad they wanted to die.

More than 46,000 people were interviewed for the study, which the compilers said represented the largest and most in-depth long-term pain survey ever conducted in Europe.

Marit Lovig, a leading member of Norway's chronic pain Patient's Association, said: "Doctors and politicians need to listen to what patients are saying.

"We hope economic arguments will convince policymakers that patients are being failed by current provisions to deal with pain. "More needs to be done to tackle pain head on."

Other key findings of the report include the fact that one in five chronic pain sufferers said they had lost a job as a result of their condition.

Only 23% had been referred to a pain specialist and one in three said they had little faith in their doctor's ability to control their pain. Almost 40% said their pain was inadequately controlled.

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