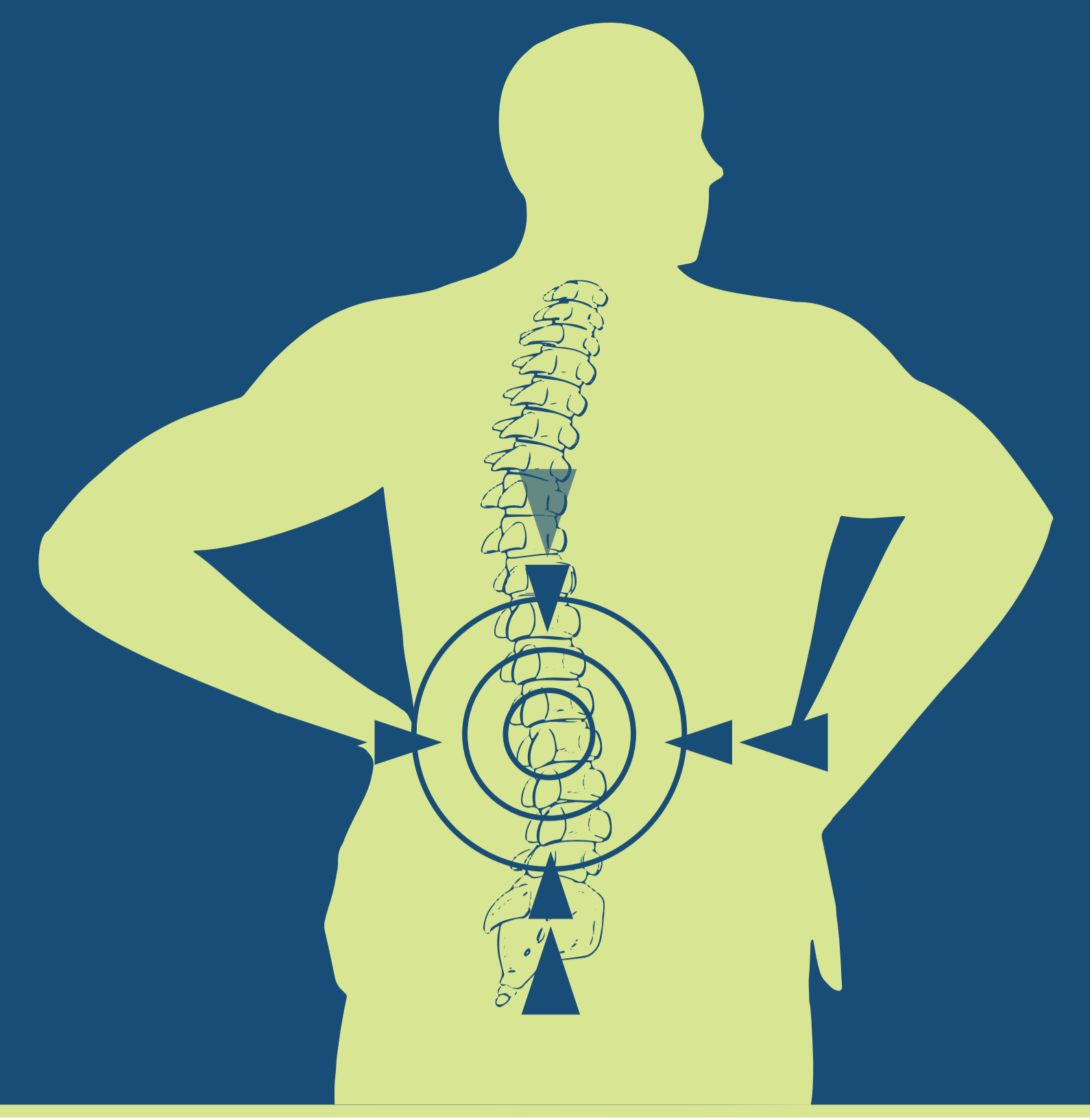


# THE CHRONIC PAIN EXPERIENCES OF THE MILITARY

## A QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS



### Authors and Affiliations

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### RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES

Explore the complexity of chronic pain experiences among

Military personnel      Veterans during their transition to civilian life      Healthcare providers

While some published work identifies and clarifies Veterans' experiences with chronic pain, a similar understanding of the military is scarce and dispersed, especially in the transition to civilian life. There is a need to understand the following

Military personnel may struggle to navigate the military culture and stigma toward reporting pain. Untreated, under-treated, or ignored pain may lead to chronic pain.

Military personnel may find it challenging to access care when they leave service. They may lose their healthcare provider and lack knowledge about the health services available to them.

Military and civilian healthcare providers may lack knowledge and training on chronic pain care for military personnel and Veterans.

### MILITARY PERSONNEL

- Physical, psychological and emotional benefits of non-pharmacological interventions
- The military lifestyle and culture – such as the mission-first mentality and pain avoidance – heavily impacted chronic pain experiences.
- This mentality fosters a stoic approach where service members prioritize mission completion over personal health. Such an attitude can potentially lead to the neglect of minor pains or discomfort, allowing these symptoms to escalate into chronic pain over time.
- Deprioritizing self-care and delaying treatment in favor of duty performance can create long-term, detrimental effects on physical well-being.
- Of note is the double stigma faced by women in the military – the stigma of chronic pain, compounded by the struggle for acceptance by their male counterparts.

### Military Personnel During Their Transition To Civilian Life

The narrative of stigma, pain avoidance, and mission-first philosophy **extends into the lives of veterans post-service**. Their transition into civilian life presents unique challenges, including **access to healthcare, reintegration difficulties, and diminished social support**

**Tailoring chronic pain services** to address these transition-related needs was highlighted as vital, underscoring the need for programs supporting veterans' reintegration into civilian life.

### STUDY CONTEXT

This review was a qualitative evidence synthesis of **25** articles representing **23** distinct studies

#### COUNTRY OF PUBLICATION



19 Articles US

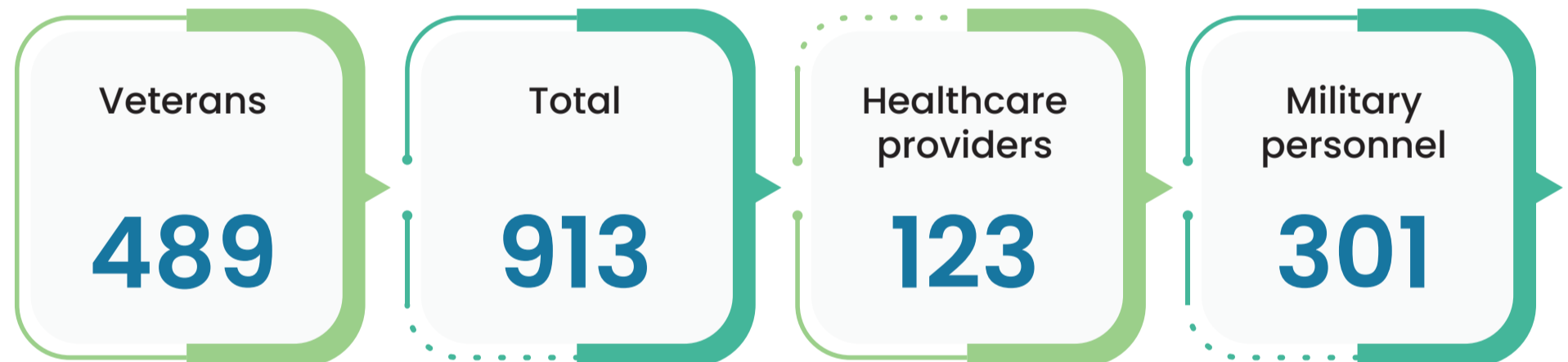


3 Articles Canada



3 Articles UK

#### PARTICIPANTS



Providers overwhelmingly acknowledged the beneficial effects of non-pharmacological interventions in managing chronic pain, highlighting **reduced opioid dependence and improved daily activities**.



### Healthcare Providers

Significant barriers surfaced, including a lack of standardized assessment tools, complexities in referral systems, and providers' knowledge gaps on chronic pain. Crucially, providers emphasized the need to understand military language and culture and how these elements affect their care approach.



However, realizing these benefits depended heavily on numerous factors, including **personalized care, understanding the chronic pain story, strong patient-provider relationships, and effective use of screening tools**.

Sponsor research to understand intervention design and effectiveness for chronic pain in the military  
**4 opportunities**



Sponsor research on the impact of the military lifestyle on chronic pain  
**4 opportunities**



Sponsor research on the connection between mental health and chronic pain  
**2 opportunities**



Fund research into effective patient-provider communication strategies  
**3 opportunities**



Sponsor research on the transition from military service to civilian life  
**5 opportunities**



Sponsor research exploring gender-specific factors in chronic pain management  
**4 opportunities**



Sponsor research not the development and evaluation of chronic pain training programs  
**3 opportunities**



Sponsor research on organizational challenges to provide chronic pain care  
**3 opportunities**



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