

Cross-Party Group on Chronic Pain

12 March 2025

Minute

Present

MSPs

Miles Briggs MSP
Jackie Baillie MSP
Fergus Ewing MSP

Invited guests

Jenni Minto MSP

Non-MSP Group Members

Ian Semmons, George Welsh, David Johnstone, Eddie Phillips, Nancy Honeyball, Dorothy-Grace Elder, Start McIver, Charlie Elphinstone, Victoria Abbott-Fleming, Dr Patrick Trust, Connor Law, Kirsteen Campbell, Jack Bradford, Anne Marie Diamond, Judith Semmons, Kirsteen Luke, Jack Bradford, David Caulfield, Suzanne Grant, Andrene Maxwell, Kirstin Laing, Jane Ormerod, Patrick Kelly, Katrina Whittingham, Rob McDowall, Catherine Hughes, Alan McGinley, Helen Goss, Rona Agnew, Alex Stobart, Peter McCarron, Kathryn Martin, Dr Jacqueline Mardon, Hazel Borland, Anne Hughes, Judith Semmons, John Thomson, Amber Welsh, Pamela Dowie, Deborah Hay, Ania Withania, Marion Scott, Dr Emma France, Dr David Weeks

Apologies

none

Agenda item 1

Minutes of previous meeting. Agreed.

The public health minister Jenni Minto said she can only attend for 30 minutes later so Group first discussed problems to raise before her arrival

Agenda item 2 Secretary's report

After two years of CPG questions, Jenni Minto has admitted that there had been Scottish Government influence in pain health research.

She did so in a letter to patient supporter Rhoda Grant MSP. (detailed below) The Clinical Priorities officials who work for Ms Minto had “commissioned and supervised” a pain report from a private firm. It had serious flaws, and cost the public £40,000. FOI showed that officials had, in advance, sent private researchers lower suffering suggested numbers for cases. The Scottish Government is still discussing removing treatments such as lidocaine infusions, injections and radiofrequency treatments, without asking patients. So anything which lessened the numbers suffering most -who get these NHS specialist treatments-would not help severe sufferers. They can't pay thousands privately.

The meeting was shown that FOI revealed civil servants insisted that patients who claimed chronic pain had “no impact” on their daily lives were found. This indicated that those in charge of health were unaware that “no impact” is not a recognised term for chronic pain by NICE, the Faculty of Pain Medicine and others as there is always some life affect through CP.

A recruitment firm advertised for patients for Scottish health research as “Interested in making extra cash?” with a moneybag emoji. Officials replaced diagnosed volunteers with people recruited at £200 each who weren't asked for proof that they had chronic pain.

FOI showed the private research firm reported they couldn't find any “no impact” patients anywhere but FOI showed Clinical Priorities officials wrote, insisting they keep trying and asked them to contact again the paid recruiters. The report eventually marked three as no impact, all strangely enough from Inverness, which brought challenge from the Inverness MSP Fergus Ewing.

Actions agreed

Miles Briggs MSP agreed to follow up with the minister on outstanding questions and to circulate information about ongoing research. The group expressed dissatisfaction with the minister's lack of concrete proposals

Members expressed scepticism about an upcoming consultation, citing past experiences of being excluded and feeling that outcomes are predetermined.

Fergus Ewing pointed out that while the former head of the civil service, John- Paul Marks, had not replied to letters about civil service competence, and ignored a meeting request from two MSPs, the CPG should write to the new permanent secretary, Joe Griffin, and the First Minister, regarding the seriously flawed report and the problems the CPG had with civil servants.

The meeting agreed to write to Joe Griffin and also to the Human Rights organisation in Scotland, to minister Minto and others