

# Pain Assessment and Management in the Cognitively Impaired

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## Background

- Pain management can be challenging in people with cognitive impairment, particularly as it may be difficult to elicit self-assessment of pain
- Research has indicated that this vulnerable group of patients are at risk of poor pain management (Bauer et al, 2016)

## Aim

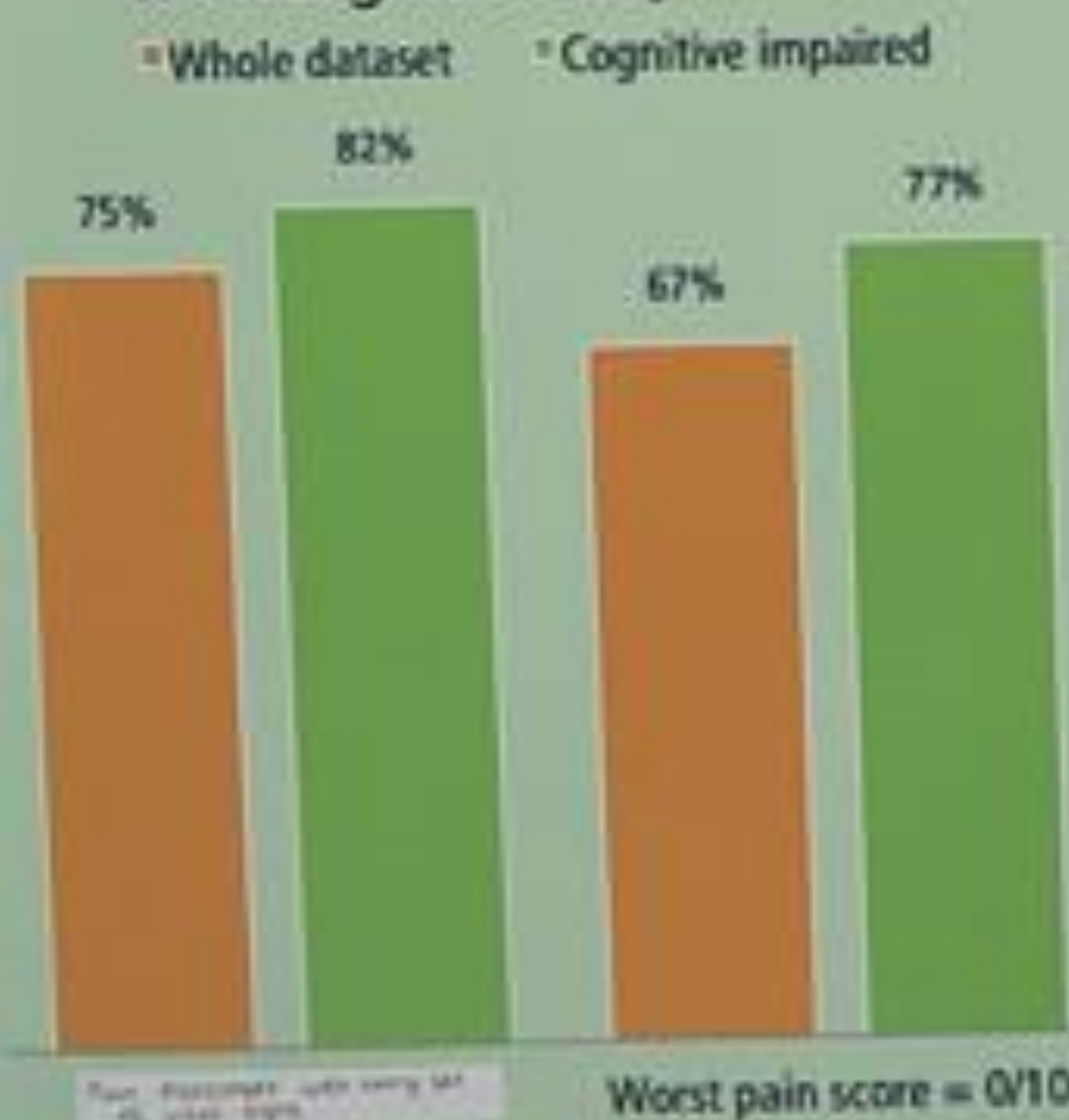
- To examine pain assessment, prevalence and management in patients with cognitive impairment
- To determine whether practices differ for this group of patients

## Methodology

- Prospective audit of in-patient vital signs chart (pain score) and prescription chart
- Each ward audited once
- N = 472
- Collated and analysed using Excel

## Results

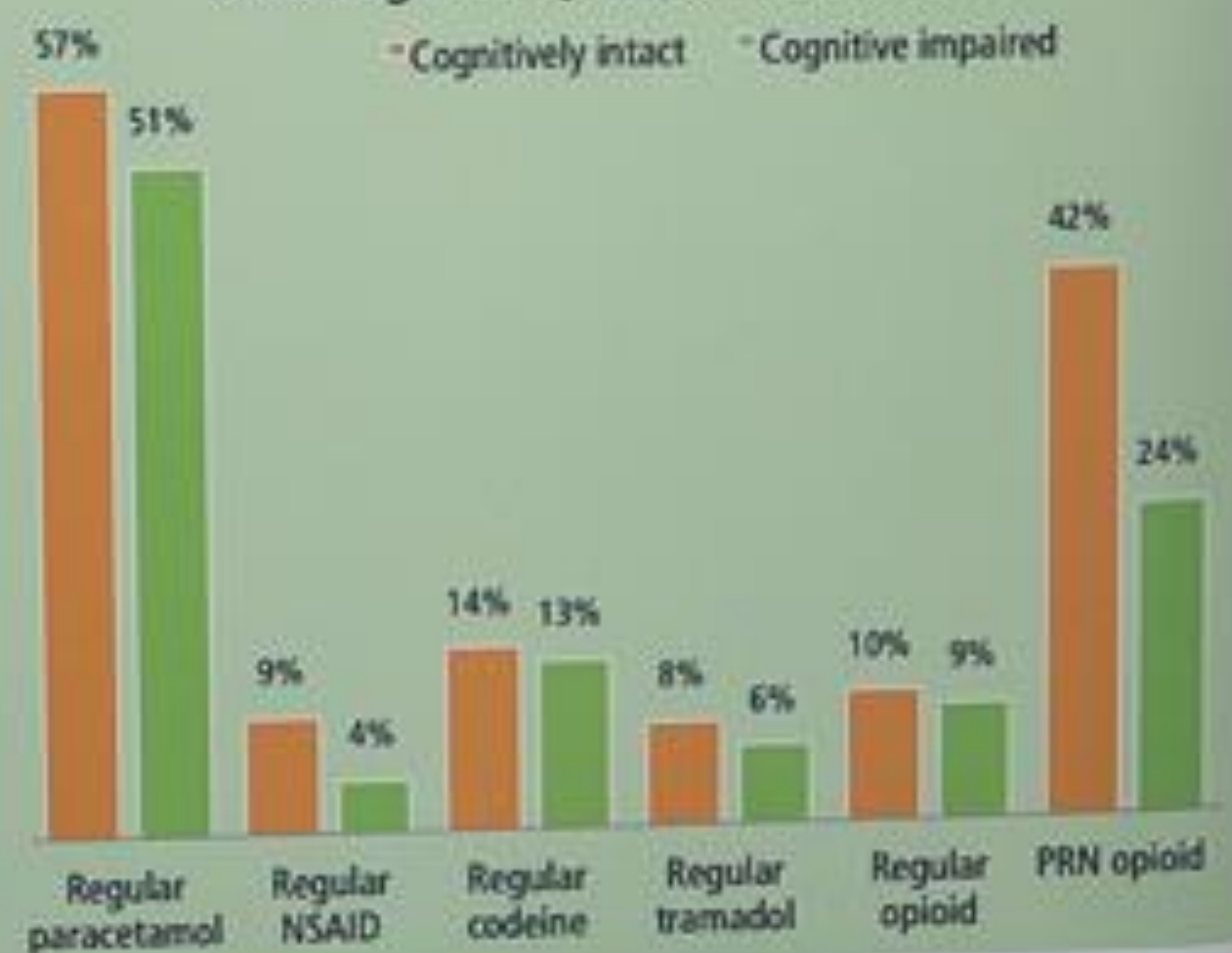
### Comparison of pain assessment between whole sample and patients with cognitive impairment



### Demographics

- Demographic profile of cognitively impaired was similar to that of the overall sample
- Predominantly female (52.1% whole dataset) (53.6% cog impaired)
- Median age 78 (whole dataset), 84 (cognitively impaired)

### Analgesia prescribed, comparing cognitively intact and cognitively impaired patients



## Conclusion

- The evidence is that patients with cognitive impairment are having their pain scored regularly
- Patients with cognitive impairment are prescribed fewer analgesics but also having lower pain scores documented.
- It is difficult to elicit if this is due to less pain or inaccuracy of assessments and documentation
- The pain scales used may not be appropriate for cognitively impaired patients.
- We were not able to verify the accuracy of pain scoring or whether the tool used was appropriate for the cognition of the individual patients

## Recommendations

- Further study required to fully evaluate pain assessment and management for patients with cognitive impairment within our Trust
- Potential to include family and friends in pain assessments
- Further study required to look at why cognitively impaired patients are prescribed less analgesics

**References:** Bauer U, Pitzer S et al (2016). Pain treatment for nursing home residents differs according to cognitive state – a cross-sectional study. Accessed on-line: [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4912815](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4912815) [15/07/2016]