Factors that enable or obstruct the continuation of work among patients with chronic pain: Qualitative analysis of patient narratives

*Mikiyo Sato¹,², Machiko Ohara³, Rika Sakuma Sato², Noriko Iba², Natsuko Takahashi⁴,² (1. Jichi Medical University, School of Nursing (Japan), 2. DIPEX-Japan(Japan), 3. Japan College of Social Work(Japan), 4. St. Luke's International University, Graduate School of Nursing Science(Japan))

Objective
Chronic pain affects the patient’s entire life. The objective of the study is to clarify factors that enable or obstruct the continuation of work of patients with chronic pain by focusing on psychosocial aspects concerning the current status of their workplace.

Method
Exploratory research was conducted based on the secondary analysis of the interview data of 31 patients with chronic pain, provided by DIPEX-Japan, which publishes a website on patients’ and family experiences of chronic pain (www.dipex-j.org/chronic-pain/).

Result
The uncontrollable intense pain was proved to be the most obstructive personal factor. However, self-management capability to adjust one's workstyle suitably made it possible for them to continue their job. Furthermore, job continuation has become possible under an environment with a work climate that accepts adjustment of working site and time as well as workload.

Conclusion
Employment not only affects the economic aspect but also relates to joy and purpose in life. On the other hand, it has been suggested that leaving their job could induce the patients to lose their confidence and decrease self-esteem with negative impacts on their lives. We need to build a comprehensive support system that enable patients to continue their work in spite of their pain.