From Capsaicin to Classifications: 30 of the Most-Cited Papers on Pain

Throughout 2024, IASP is celebrating its 50th anniversary, culminating at the 20th World Congress on Pain. As IASP reflects on contributions to the field of pain, it’s immensely proud of the advancements in pain research accomplished by its incredible members.

To highlight (albeit a fraction of) these advancements, IASP has compiled three separate lists of the “Top 10 Most-Cited Papers on Pain,” based on the number of citations and categorized by article type: Primary research papers, “review” papers (i.e., any review, guideline, editorial, commentary, hypothesis exploration, etc.), and methodology papers. Feel free to click any of the titles below to read more!

**Primary Research Papers**


**“Review” Papers**

- **Headache Classification Committee of the International Headache Society.** (1988) *Classification and diagnostic criteria for headache disorders, cranial neuralgias and facial pain.* Cephalalgia 8:1–96. [5,877 citations]*
• **Hawker, G.A. et al. (2011)** *Measures of adult pain*: Visual Analog Scale for pain (VAS Pain), Numeric Rating Scale for pain (NRS Pain), McGill Pain Questionnaire (SF-MPQ), Chronic Pain Grade Scale (CPGS), Short Form-36 Bodily Pain Scale (SF-36 BPS), and Measure of Intermittent and Constant Osteoarthritis Pain (ISOAP). Arthritis Care and Research 63, Suppl. 11. [3,098 citations]


• **Woolf, C.J. (2011)** *Central sensitization: implications for the diagnosis and treatment of pain*. PAIN 152, Suppl. 3. [2,926 citations]


---

**Methodology Papers**


• **Bennett, G.J. & Xie, Y.-K. (1988)** *A peripheral mononeuropathy in rat that produces disorders of pain sensation like those seen in man*. PAIN 33:87-107. [4,646 citations]


• **Farrar, J.T. et al. (2001)** *Clinical importance of changes in chronic pain intensity measured on an 11-point numerical pain rating scale*. PAIN 94:149-158. [4,085 citations]


• **Price, D.D. et al. (1983)** *The validation of visual analogue scales as ratio scale measures for chronic and experimental pain*. PAIN 17:45-56. [2,817 citations]

---

Which of these papers do you think has had the greatest impact on the field of pain research? Share your thoughts on X/Twitter using #IASP50, and follow us at @IASPpain!

*IASP would like to express its gratitude to Jeffrey S. Mogil, PhD (McGill University, Montreal, Canada), for his assistance in compiling these lists and years of service to IASP and its mission.*

**Methodology:** A search of the Scopus database was performed on 26 January 2024. The search term was “pain” within the article title (as a search of the term “pain” as a keyword yielded too many irrelevant hits). The search yielded 293,915 documents, which were sorted by total citations as of the search date. Jeff Mogil reviewed the list to compile three top-10 lists: 1) Primary Research Papers, 2) “Review” Papers, and 3) Methodology Papers. The number of citations for each paper is bracketed. *Note: Of the 293,915 documents, only 190 of them (i.e., 0.06%) have garnered 1,000 or more citations.*

*Now referred to as The International Classification of Headache Disorders, 1st Edition.*