

Supplementary Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the study participants (n=21)

Demographic characteristics		Frequency	Percentage %
Age (in years)	18-30	2	9.5
	31-40	3	14.3
	41-50	5	23.8
	51-60	7	33.3
	61-70	4	19.0
Ethnicity	Sinhala	18	85.7
	Tamil	2	9.5
	Muslim	1	4.8
Religion	Buddhism	14	66.7
	Catholic /Christianity	4	19.0
	Hindu	2	9.5
	Islam	1	4.8
Gender	Female	12	57.1
	Male	9	42.9
Current Marital status	Married	16	76.2
	Unmarried	2	9.5
	Divorced/ separated	1	4.8
	Widow	2	9.5
Highest level of education	Not been to school	0	0
	Grade 1-5	4	19.0
	Grade 6-11	10	47.6
	Grade 12-13	6	28.6

	Graduate	1	4.8
	Post graduate	0	0
Monthly income (LKR)	< 5,000	18	85.7
	5,001-10,000	0	0
	10,001-15,000	0	0
	15,001-20,000	0	0
	>20,000	3	14.3
Type of family	Nuclear	11	52.4
	Extended	10	47.6
Availability of helper	Yes	15	71.4
	No	6	28.6
Family responsibilities	Yes	13	61.9
	No	8	38.1
Time since diagnosis of cancer	< 1 year	11	52.4
	> 1 year	10	47.6
Type of Cancer	Uro-genital	4	19.0
	Gastro-intestinal	6	28.6
	Breast	4	19.0
	Other	5	23.8
	Lung	2	9.5
Duration of cancer pain	1-3 months	9	42.9
	>3 months	12	57.1
Presence of co-morbid diseases	Yes	6	28.6
	No	15	71.4

Supplementary Table 2: Theme 1: Understanding pain

Meaning units	Condensed Meaning units	Codes	Categories	Themes
<i>"This pain is the biggest problem I ever had."</i> <i>"It is so hard ...not to let this kind of pain happen again."</i>	Persisting pain despite being on medications. Episodes of pain experienced seem intolerable.	Pain is the biggest problem.	Physical and emotional impact	Understanding pain
<i>"I am thinking is this a 'karma' which I had done in a previous birth."</i>	People believe that the pain experienced as a result of doing in previous births/destinies.	'Karma' causes pain	Cultural and spiritual interpretations	
<i>"The God is the one who gave me this pain."</i>	This pain is given by god/ or super-natural power as a punishment	God-given the pain		

Supplementary Table 3: Theme 2- Coping strategies for living with pain

Meaning units	Condensed meaning units	Codes	Categories	Themes
<i>"Otherwise, I go for a walk with my kitten and puppy... it helps me to pain relief."</i>	Used to do something that distracts the feeling of pain Engage in hobbies	Use of distraction methods	Medication and self-control	Coping strategies for living with pain

<i>"I do not let others at home know that I am in pain. So I bear-up on tight somehow."</i>	Used to tolerate pain by him/herself without letting the others know	Positive thinking		
<i>"I offer flowers, light, every morning and evening to Lord Buddha... it gives me happiness."</i>	Believe in religious rituals to relieve pain and to get mental satisfaction. Praying/ hoping	Find ways of relaxation/ reduce the stress of life	Seeking spiritual support	
<i>"I pray when I get unbearable pain or sadness. Then I feel a bit at ease."</i>	Believe in God/ Jesus in relieving pain	Seek God's support/ trust/hope		
<i>"I did 'yanthra manthra adurukam' to get a relief. They gave kashaya"</i>	Believe in traditional customs native treatment	Seek the help of super-natural powers		
<i>"People in my workplace too helped me a lot... it is a great relief for me".</i>	Some people help the patients to cope with pain, share grievances, and pain relief.	Positive social relationships	Receiving social support	
<i>"I took 'Sinhala beheth from vedamahaththaya, not only these drugs."</i>	Patients try several home remedies and other alternative treatment methods for pain relief.	Find pain-relieving methods	Exploring alternative treatments lifestyle	
<i>"I adjusted the time of taking drugs a little bit."</i>	They used to take medications given by the pain clinic,	Taking medications as prescribed	Adapting daily life	

	timing adjusted to their lifestyle.	without any fail		
<i>"I used to take two tablets of Paracetamol and go to sleep."</i>	Some patients have taken pain medications over the counter to control unbearable pain.	Taking medications out of prescription		
<i>"I used to do my work slowly when the pain goes.."</i> <i>"Most of the time, I used to stay at home because of pain."</i>	Patients have adjusted the speed of daily activities within their limits. Practice life-style changes to escape from pain	Adjustments to daily chores		