

A Brief Synopsis on Benefits of Chronic Pain Management

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DESCRIPTION

Pain management is concerned with the reduction of suffering and hence the enhancement of quality of life. Pain of any sort is debilitating but long term or chronic pain is devastating, not only for the sufferer but also for the whole family, friends and careers. It is difficult to imagine what someone else in pain is feeling. Successful management of chronic pain requires a full appreciation of the multidimensional nature of pain and of the pathophysiological changes that occur throughout the nervous system in response to disease, injury and nerve damage. Treatment should be individualized and a holistic approach encouraged. Pain relief and management have been neglected areas of medicine, mainly owing to the way in which our attitudes to the relief of pain have developed.

Expansion of chronic pain management has increased the benefits to patients. Until recently the main focus was on acute pain management to chronic problems. Many patients suffer from conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis, chronic back problems, osteoporosis and spinal injury to name but a few. All are complex conditions and the underlying symptom is pain in all cases. Management and treatment of this pain is not straightforward, patients do not swallow pills go away and feel better. Usually, by the time that they are seen in the Chronic Pain Management Clinic they feel as if they have been 'through the mill' and are often at the end of their tether [1]. Some are depressed, have low self-esteem and are usually desperate for any sort of help offered. They are generally referred when their condition is deteriorating with few avenues left open. These patients need plenty of support and encouragement, need time to talk-useful therapy in itself, and to know that someone is interested in helping them, believing what they say. A percentage of the patients seen are knowledgeable about their condition and need to have the opportunity to ask questions. Knowledge is empowering, another step towards them feeling in control [2]. The introduction of education leaflets in own clinic gives patients the opportunity to read, digest and understand what the service is about and have specific information about procedures which may be part of their treatment plan. Patient education plays an essential part in providing a high quality of care [3].

A 24 hour recall service has been introduced into our Chronic Pain Management Service giving patients access to a nurse specialist four days of the week and an answer-phone for out-of-hours calls. This telephone line is being used a great deal and patients feel they can seek advice about any anxieties they may have with regard to their treatment, often little things which could escalate if not dealt with promptly. Patients have access to complementary therapies. Reflexology has been available for at least 12 months and acupuncture introduced six month ago. Both therapies are quite popular with patients and seem to work well in conjunction with a more conventional approach to pain management [4]. Patient counseling, physiotherapy and access to the functional restoration programmer are other services that can be utilized if appropriate. With the appointment of the nurse specialist and another medical consultant in pain management, waiting times for new patients have almost halved and this illustrates that the service is being improved and not just maintained and thereby enhancing the quality of patient care [5]. This expertise can only be delivered from specialists trained in this field and this is why patients with pain stand the best chance of receiving help and relief if they are referred to a pain management clinic. Here the cause of the pain can be investigated and understood and its impact on the body lessened, thus minimizing any disability it might cause [6].

CONCLUSION

The wide expertise available using a multi-disciplinary approach to chronic pain can only be beneficial to the patient. A dedicated professional service means that the patient's needs are the first and last consideration when dealing with such a complex phenomenon as pain response to disease or trauma affects us all in different ways and careful assessment means the patients' needs are always a priority. The Patients' charter was introduced to improve the quality of service provided to patients. In some areas this may have happened but in others it has just increased the demand put on the Health Service and consequently care has actually suffered. Patients have become so empowered that they demand every service and referral they think may be beneficial to their health care.

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