

Interventional Pain Management Can Be the Answer for Chronic Pain Sufferers

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INTERVENTIONAL PAIN MANAGEMENT

Thousands of people around the country live with chronic pain. It could be the dull pain related to headaches, the crippling pain of fibromyalgia, or pain that originated with trauma to the neck or back from an old sports injury or accident. The physical effects of chronic pain include tense muscles, limited mobility, a change in appetite and an overall lack of energy. Prolonged physical effects can lead to emotional issues such as depression, anger, and anxiety.

Chronic pain is best described as persistent pain that lasts longer than three months or beyond the expected period of healing and is not relieved by standard medical management. Often with chronic pain, normal lifestyles can be restricted or even impossible.

Living with chronic pain, however, should not be the same as living in pain. With today's highly advanced interventional pain management technology there are many ways to treat the pain that does not involve a life reliant on medications.

Interventional pain management is defined by the American Society of Interventional Pain Physicians (ASIPP) as "a discipline of medicine devoted to the diagnosis and treatment of pain related disorders." Interventional pain management is a welcome alternative for individuals who have exhausted traditional treatment methods.

This multidisciplinary approach to relieving, reducing or managing pain starts with your primary care physician. Your doctor will begin by looking for the root cause of the problem, and in many cases refer you to a pain management specialist who will work in collaboration with you and your primary care physician to develop a treatment plan.

A pain management specialist is a doctor board certified in pain management and frequently also board certified in additional disciplines such as anesthesiology, neurology or physical medicine and rehab. The pain management specialist begins by performing a comprehensive physical exam and thorough evaluation of your medical history. This may involve a series of diagnostic tests to rule out other conditions that present similar symptoms. Based on this knowledge, the pain management specialist will develop a treatment plan to help reduce your pain and regain control of your life.

A pain management treatment plan combines interventional treatments, physical and occu-

pational rehab, complementary and alternative methods, and psychosocial support. Key to the success of the treatment, however, is the patient. Without patient cooperation and openness to new treatment methods, successful outcomes cannot be achieved.

According to Sg2, a leading healthcare intelligence organization, studies show that 60 percent of patients in chronic pain management programs experience pain reduction as compared to 25 percent of patients receiving conventional medical treatment. Also, the need for medication can be reduced up to 75 percent.

Depending on the type of pain a person is suffering, there are several interventional procedures that can be used on an outpatient basis, such as epidural injections into the spine, nerve blocks to reduce pain, spinal cord stimulation using electrical impulses, discography that takes an inside look at discs to determine the source of pain, and implantable drug pumps that deliver pain medications right to the source of the problem. Even more advanced techniques and procedures include spinal cord and peripheral nerve stimulator implantation, spinal injections and fracture augmentation procedures such as vertebroplasty and kyphoplasty that involve injecting acrylic cement into the fractured vertebra for stabilization.

Remember that chronic pain sufferers do not have to go it alone. Pain management programs like the one offered at Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital are close to home, and provide the expertise and advanced treatment methods that can put you on the road to a pain-free life.



J. Nnaemeka Onwuta, M.D., is board certified in anesthesiology and pain management and serves as the medical director of Advocate Good Shepherd's Interventional Pain Center. In practice for the past 15 years, he is a member of the Advocate Medical Group and has offices in Algonquin and Barrington. He received his medical degree from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and did his fellowship in pain management at Cook County Hospital. He is a member of the American Society of Interventional Pain Practice, the American Academy of Pain Management, and the American Society of Anesthesiologists. Dr. Onwuta is a delegate to the Illinois State Medical Society and is the former president of the Kane County Medical Society.

Pain management specialist Dr. J. Nnaemeka Onwuta's practice philosophy is to provide competent medical care to patients while treating them with respect, compassion and the utmost devotion to their needs.

Dr. Onwuta recommends starting with your primary care physician when experiencing any pain-related issues.

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