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HOSPICE

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Tackling Chronic Pain Through Symptom Management

Chronic pain is emerging as a major health concern. It has negative impacts on patients, their families, and society as a whole. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that chronic pain leads to \$560 billion each year in direct medical costs, lost productivity, and disability programs. In addition, a growing number of deaths are caused by pain medicine overdose.

Medical experts say that pain has many causes, and people respond to it in unique ways. Pain can be sharp, throbbing, stabbing, dull, stinging, or described in other ways. A type of pain that one person can handle might be unbearable to another. Sometimes pain can be a bother, like a mild headache. Other times it can be crippling.

Acute pain comes on suddenly for a limited time. It is often caused by damage to tissue such as bone, muscle, or organs. It may include anxiety or emotional distress.

Chronic pain lasts longer and is often related to an illness. It also can be caused by damaged tissue or nerves. Chronic pain can limit a person's daily life and work activities, reduce quality of life, cause depression, and lead to pain medicine addiction.

In 2016, an estimated 20.4% of U.S. adults had chronic pain (about 50 million people), according to the CDC. It is one of the most common reasons adults seek medical care.

Treatment Plan

Besides the obvious physical impacts, pain often affects patients emotionally, socially, and psychologically. Effective pain management requires a multi-step approach with various treatment options:

- Drug therapy (over-the-counter and prescription)
- Physical therapy and exercise
- Other medical treatments (injections, nerve blocks, surgical implants, nerve stimulation)



- Psychological/cognitive-behavioral methods (changing thoughts, emotions, behaviors)
- Alternative and mind-body therapies (acupuncture, massage, meditation)
- Diet and nutrition

Figuring out how well pain medicines work can be difficult because each patient's situation is different. For example, not all types of pain respond well to opioids. Clinicians have learned that opioids should only be used for certain types of pain because of their risk of addiction.

Specialized pain clinics commonly involve physicians, nurses, psychologists, physical therapists, patients, and families in the care plan. The aim is to help treat pain and also teach the patient how to function in spite of it.

Before you see your clinician, record a pain diary over a two-week period. Include a description of what you were doing when you had the pain, the type of pain you felt, and how bad the pain was on a scale of 1 (no pain) to 10 (the worst pain possible).

We care about your quality of life. We will do everything possible to help manage your pain so you can live each day as fully as possible. Call us today if you have questions about pain management for you or your loved one.

Telemedicine: A Growing Trend to Help Older Adults Stay Independent

Older adults with complex care needs want to live on their own for as long as they can. Telemedicine may help make this a reality. The AARP reports that this new method of healthcare improves access to care, improves the quality of care and results, and lowers costs. Family caregivers also have lower levels of stress.

Through telemedicine, healthcare providers can deliver a wide range of diagnostic, therapeutic, and care management services that otherwise would be delivered in a healthcare setting or by in-person home visits. Telemedicine is offered to patients with many needs — such as those who have chronic conditions — which often results in emergency room visits and hospital admissions.

Technology Tools

Wearable devices and home monitoring tools can be used to remotely track the mobility of a growing number of seniors who want to “age in place.” Telemedicine offers a way for them to stay safely in their homes even with chronic health problems.

People receiving palliative care at home can use telemedicine to track their symptoms. This makes more information available to their care team. Telemedicine will notify doctors and nurses in real time so they can take action as patients weaken and symptoms worsen.

For hospice patients near the end of life, time and communication are critical. Hence, hands-on visits are by no means replaced, according to telemedicine experts. For these patients, in-person, compassionate communication and comfort are aided by instant remote information through telemedicine.

Patient Benefits

Telemedicine allows patients who are recovering from a stroke or suffering from diseases such as multiple sclerosis or Parkinson’s to undergo rehab at home. Clinicians check in to monitor patients with chronic conditions as they describe symptoms via email, perform self-tests, and join educational programs.

Mobile health technology helps diabetics count calories, log workouts, and track vital signs, drug doses, and schedules. With routine three-minute phone calls to their doctor, cardiac patients can be encouraged to take blood pressure medicine, quit smoking, change their diet, or begin an exercise routine.

Setting Standards

Telemedicine visits have increased

significantly in the U.S. in recent years. But most Americans still receive care in person rather than through technology, according to a medical study. Most telemedicine patients are satisfied. But in order to expand, it must become easier for clinicians to receive payment for using this approach to care.

In July 2018, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) proposed changes to the payment system. Changes allow home health agencies to include the cost of remote patient monitoring for Medicare reimbursement.

“[This] proposal would give doctors more time to spend with their patients, allow home health agencies to leverage innovation, and drive better results for patients,” notes CMS Administrator Seema Verma.



Some people mistakenly think hospice care is just about dying...nothing could be further from the truth. Hospice helps patients and families focus on living. Angels Grace Hospice, LLC, brings comfort, dignity and peace to help people with a life-limiting illness live every moment of life to the fullest. We also provide support for family and friends.

We are licensed in the state of Illinois, Medicare Certified, Joint Commission Accredited and are locally owned and operated by experienced professionals dedicated to providing excellent end-of-life care for Will, Cook, DuPage, Kendall, Grundy, and Kane counties. Please contact us for more information.

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To comfort always... this is our work

