

BACK PAIN **A Silent Epidemic**

Four Out Of Five Adults Will Experience Low Back Pain Sometime During Their Life ®

(NAPSA)—More than 50 million Americans suffer from chronic back pain according to the American Pain Foundation and close to one quarter (23 percent) of all chronic pain sufferers have lower back pain, according to a survey commissioned by Partners Against Pain®. Yet of the patients surveyed who suffer from pain, 80 percent believe that their pain is part of a medical condition and something with which they must live. While pain is the chief complaint of most patients visiting a health care professional, some 40 percent of sufferers are uncomfortable discussing their pain.

According to a recent article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, more than 26 million people between 20 and 64 years of age have frequent or persistent back pain. There are different types of back pain, including mild back pain (pain that is bothersome, aching, sore) and severe back pain (pain that hurts all the time, even when resting). Doctors usually refer to back pain as either acute, subacute or chronic.

Acute back pain can last from one to seven days, and about 80 percent of all back pain is acute. Most acute back pain results from unknown causes, but probably results from minor strains, sprains and overuse. Emotional stress may also add to the pain, especially since it slows the rate of recovery.

Subacute back pain usually lasts from seven days to seven weeks and is usually mild (though it can be severe) and often unrelated to other illnesses. Subacute back pain accounts for some 10-to-20 percent of all back pain.

Chronic back pain usually lasts more than three months, may be mild or severe and accounts for five-to-ten percent of all back pain.

Pain is a growing problem for

physicians, patients and employers alike. When not treated properly or, in many cases, not treated at all, pain can result in depression, loss of functions and many lost workdays. Back pain is the most frequent cause of lost workdays in adults under the age of 45 after the common cold.

Fortunately, no one today has to suffer in silence. Effective therapies/treatments are available and it is important for physicians and patients to realize that pain can be managed if diagnosed and treated properly.

There are several treatment options for patients who suffer from back pain. Medications, including non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID), non-opioid analgesics and non-drug pain treatments, such as activity modification are commonly used. Severe, chronic back pain may require an epidural block, surgery, or stronger medication such as opioids, to provide patients with relief.

It is important that patients do not shy away from sharing their pain with their treating physicians. Properly describing the severity and frequency of pain experienced helps health care professionals prescribe the most appropriate and effective pain management regimen.

Partners Against Pain® is a valuable information resource for medical professionals and patients to learn more about pain management. Partners Against Pain® offers free information and tools, such as a Pain Control Record and Pain Control Plan, to help manage pain. This information is available on the Internet at www.partnersagainstpain.com or can be requested by writing Partners Against Pain at One Stamford Forum, Department M, Stamford, Connecticut, 06901-3431.