



Get Informed About Managing Your Pain

(NAPSA)—Nearly 80 percent of pain sufferers believe that their pain is a normal part of a medical condition and something with which they must live, according to a survey conducted by Partners Against Pain® (PAP). In fact, the American Pain Foundation estimates that more than 50 million Americans suffer from chronic pain due to a specific illness or medical condition. When pain is not treated properly or left untreated, it can lead to depression and loss of function—accounting for nearly \$100 billion in health care costs and lost productivity.

While chronic pain is common within the U.S., many people do not realize that there are things they can do to alleviate their pain. It is important for physicians and patients to realize that chronic pain can be managed. A program that includes both non-drug treatments and medication is often recommended.

Non-drug Treatments:

Physical therapy and exercise relax muscles and release tension. Stretching and strengthening exercises, as well as aerobic exercise such as cycling, swimming or walking all may offer some relief from chronic pain.

Biofeedback and relaxation techniques (yoga and meditation) also may help alleviate pain. These techniques help to relieve stress, which can increase muscle tension and aggravate pain.

Alternative approaches to pain management include acupuncture, therapeutic massage, nutritional or other remedies. These therapies may also help improve sleep, reduce anxiety and in-



There are numerous treatments available for people with chronic pain.

crease a patient's sense of self-control.

Due to the unrelenting nature of chronic pain, *psychotherapy* is also often recommended for patients. Individual or group counseling may help the chronic pain sufferer learn valuable coping skills and provide emotional support when dealing with pain.

Medications for Pain:

Acetaminophen is available as an over-the-counter medication used to help relieve mild to moderate pain. Acetaminophen is widely used, inexpensive, and generally recognized as a safe medication with relatively few side effects. However, long-term regular use of high dose acetaminophen can cause liver damage.

NSAIDs are commonly available as over-the-counter medications and include aspirin and ibuprofen. Stronger formulations are also available with a doctor's

prescription. NSAIDs reduce pain caused by inflammation and are useful for treating mild to moderate pain. However, high doses of these medications and extended use may result in ulcers and stomach problems.

Cox-2 inhibitors are useful for treating chronic pain associated with arthritis and are the newest form of NSAID. These medications, however, target a specific enzyme within the body and as such lead to fewer stomach complications.

Opioids are often the most effective prescription medication for moderate to severe pain and include codeine, hydrocodone, oxycodone, hydromorphone and morphine and are available only with a doctor's prescription. The most serious risk associated with opioids is respiratory depression. Common opioid side effects are constipation, nausea, sedation, dizziness, vomiting, headache, dry mouth, sweating and weakness. There is a risk of abuse or addiction with opioids. In properly managed patients with pain, this risk has been reported to be rare. However data are not available which shows the exact incidence of addiction in chronic pain patients. Those with a history of drug abuse may be at higher risk of developing abuse or addiction to opioids.

For additional information about pain management, consult with your doctor or a pain specialist. Also, the PAP Web site, which can be accessed online by visiting www.partnersagainstpain.com, is a valuable resource for pain management information.