

Unraveling The Mystery Behind Chronic And Often Painful Bladder Condition

Interstitial Cystitis May Affect Hundreds Of Thousands But Frequently Goes Undiagnosed

(NAPSA)—Imagine having to make constant trips to the bathroom day and night. Imagine living with frequent bladder and pelvic pain. Imagine being afraid to leave your home, or travel in a car or a plane, for fear of not having immediate access to a restroom. This is the reality faced by many people with interstitial cystitis.

Interstitial cystitis (IC) is a chronic, painful and potentially debilitating bladder condition that affects nearly half a million people in the United States, 90 percent of whom are women. Symptoms of IC include the urgent and frequent need to urinate, as well as bladder or pelvic pain. Additionally, one of the most common symptoms of IC is pain or discomfort during or after sexual intercourse. In many cases, IC sufferers can experience a flare up during the week before their menstrual cycle. Onset of these symptoms usually begins in middle age.

According to C. Lowell Parsons, M.D., professor of surgery and urology at the University of California, San Diego, IC may be the most frequently misdiagnosed condition in the United States, with approximately 90 percent of IC patients receiving an improper diagnosis. Physicians often mistake IC symptoms for those of a urinary tract infection and/or other gynecological conditions such as endometriosis, vulvar-vestibulitis or yeast vaginitis. Consequently, patients are prescribed antibiotics, which prove ineffective. Research has shown that the disease may be present for 2-4 years before a proper IC diagnosis is given, thereby causing patients to endure years of pain and frustration.

“IC is widely misunderstood, even within the medical profession,” says Parsons. “People who think they might be affected by IC should speak with their doctors, or contact the Interstitial Cystitis Association to learn more about the condition.

Currently, there are several treatments available that may offer relief from IC symptoms. Elmiron® (pentosan polysulfate



sodium) is the first and only FDA-approved oral medication for treating the pain and discomfort of IC. ** “Data has shown that Elmiron® is an effective therapy for IC,” says Parsons. “This drug represents the first real breakthrough in treating more than 70 percent of IC patients. People who respond to Elmiron® experience improvement.” Other treatments, including hydrodistention and DMSO, which require an invasive procedure that instills medication directly into the bladder, may also benefit some IC sufferers.

If you or someone you know is experiencing the urgent and frequent need to urinate, bladder/pelvic pain and pain during sexual intercourse; or, if you’ve been diagnosed with endometriosis or frequent urinary tract infections, it may be IC. Talk to your doctor about proper diagnosis and treatment.

For additional information about IC or available treatment options, visit www.bladderhealth.net or call 1-877-ON-COURSE.

** *In clinical trials, adverse events associated with Elmiron tended to be infrequent, mild and transient. The most common observed side effects were diarrhea, nausea, localized hair loss (reversible upon discontinuation), headache, rash, upset stomach, abdominal pain, liver function abnormalities and dizziness, each of which occurred in one to four percent of patients. Elmiron is contraindicated in patients with known hypersensitivity to the drug, structurally altered compounds, or excipients. This article is sponsored by ALZA Corporation, marketers of Elmiron.*