
Your Pain Management Team

The Oregon Pain Management Commission and many pain experts believe that the majority of pain care should occur at the community level in the medical home where you see your primary care provider (PCP). Although your PCP will coordinate your pain care, the PCP may work with a variety of healthcare professionals. When appropriate, your PCP may also refer you to a pain specialist or pain clinic if the PCP believes that this additional expertise will help in treating your chronic pain. Following is a list of the other types of healthcare professionals and the types of expertise that they may provide in helping you manage your chronic pain. Ask your PCP if any of the following treatments are appropriate for you. Many insurance companies will reimburse for the care provided by these healthcare team members.

BEHAVIORAL MEDICINE SPECIALISTS AND CHRONIC PAIN MANAGEMENT

Psychologists, Psychiatrists, professionals with a degree in Masters of Social Work (MSW), and other mental health therapists may be important and effective members of the pain management treatment team. These Behavioral Medicine Specialists address the psychological (mental and emotional) aspects of pain and the disorders that contribute to chronic pain. These specialists may use broad one-on-one interviews and interactions to help you tackle symptoms that often accompany chronic pain. This includes depression, anxiety and grief over the loss of a life without pain. They can also help you with issues that can complicate the evaluation and treatment of chronic pain. This includes topics such as possible co-occurring mental health problems and potential addictions.

Behavioral Medicine Specialists may help you develop a “flare-up” management plan with self-management tools to deal with your chronic pain. They may teach you stress management techniques such as deep breathing, self-hypnosis, and biofeedback. They may also help you accept your pain with a change in behaviors for a more positive focus on living productively with your chronic pain.

NURSES AND CHRONIC PAIN MANAGEMENT

Nurses are the member of your multidisciplinary team with whom you may spend the most time. Nurses can help you by explaining the side-effects of medicines or

treatments used to address your chronic pain. Nurses may actually have more time than your PCP to discuss the ways you can self-manage your chronic pain and to answer some of your questions about your condition.

Nurses can work with you to help manage other medical conditions you have that may impact your pain, sleep, diet and nutrition. They may also be able to answer your questions about using non-drug interventions, such as the use of ice, heat, distraction, music and imagery in coping with chronic pain.

Some Nurse Practitioners may also serve as your Primary Care Provider. These Nurse Practitioners and some Clinical Nurse Specialists are able to evaluate and treat your pain. They may also be able to treat pain and prescribe all pain medicines including Controlled Substances.

NATUROPATHIC PHYSICIANS AND CHRONIC PAIN MANAGEMENT

Naturopathic Physicians address chronic pain with a holistic orientation—that is, they address all aspects of your physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health. Naturopathic medicine suggests that there is a natural healing power in the body that when activated establishes, maintains and restores health.

Naturopathic Physicians use a variety of nutritional, plant-based, and physical approaches to improve your overall health and to treat the source of your chronic pain. Naturopathic Physicians will address your chronic pain through a goal of supporting and optimizing the body's natural healing ability by using lifestyle counseling, recommending dietary supplements and medicinal plants and possibly with the use of rehabilitative exercise, injection therapy and physical medicine.

Some Naturopathic Physicians may serve as a Primary Care Provider (PCP) to address all of your healthcare needs, as well as treating your chronic pain. You may want to check with your insurance plan to confirm that your Naturopathic Physician can also serve as your PCP.

CHIROPRACTIC PHYSICIANS AND CHRONIC PAIN MANAGEMENT

Chiropractic Physicians evaluate patients and make a diagnosis with information determined during a physical examination. Chiropractic Physicians may order lab tests and radiological studies and use specialized methods to identify the causes and lifestyle factors that may contribute to problems with the spine, poor health and chronic pain. They may treat you with spinal adjustments to mobilize your muscles and skeleton to aid in reducing your chronic pain and to improve your ability to function and participate in everyday activities of living. Chiropractic

Physicians may also treat you with nutritional supplements and herbs and/or alternative drug therapies that assist your body's natural ability to relieve pain, restore health, prevent disease and address your chronic pain. Chiropractic Physicians may address your chronic pain with curative and postural exercises, mind/body techniques, biofeedback and relaxation training, etc. Oregon law permits Chiropractic Physicians to write orders to send you to a Physical Therapist or to a medical specialist.

PHYSICAL THERAPISTS AND CHRONIC PAIN MANAGEMENT

Physical Therapists apply the latest research to help people get back in motion. Physical Therapists are the healthcare experts who will examine your muscles and skeleton and the nerves related to your muscles and movement and how they are impacted by your chronic pain.

Physical Therapists can teach you about how to avoid pain and disability and how to proceed in your activities of daily living if you are living with chronic pain. They can teach you habits of good posture and body mechanics (the way you use your body in activities), safe exercise routines and healthy activity choices. They can also work with you on your coordination and balance training. They can teach you strengthening and flexibility exercises to help you develop an independent and more active life in which you can be more self-sufficient, even while living with chronic pain.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS AND CHRONIC PAIN MANAGEMENT

Occupational Therapists work with people with chronic pain to help them learn to manage the physical and psychological effects of chronic pain. They teach you how to lead a more active and productive life while living with chronic pain. Occupational Therapists will use helpful activities to assist your brain to reorganize itself by creating new nerve connections. They train your brain by using healing activities to improve your reasoning, recognition and insight abilities.

Occupational Therapists will help you identify specific activities or behaviors that aggravate your pain. They will assess the environment in which you live, work and play and then teach you methods to perform your activities of daily living in a way that decreases the frequency and extent of painful episodes. They will help you identify life factors that can be changed and help you develop a plan to decrease the harmful effects of such factors. (For example, they can teach you how to change your sleeping arrangements to improve rest so that your sleep is less negatively affected by your chronic pain and so that your chronic pain is less

impacted by poor sleep.) They help you get your focus off of the pain and back to “living life fully.”

Occupational Therapists help you break tasks down so that you can understand a number of different ways to accomplish your activities associated with daily living and work. They can also teach you how to use adaptive equipment to decrease pain while you are participating in everyday activities such as dressing, cooking, performing household chores, performing tasks connected with your occupation, etc.

CLINICAL EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGISTS AND CHRONIC PAIN MANAGEMENT

Clinical Exercise Physiologists are trained healthcare providers who are specifically trained in exercise science to help you improve your strength and physical performance while you are living with chronic pain.

Clinical Exercise Physiologists may work in a clinic or a non-clinic setting. Often they work in programs that focus on individuals who are recuperating from the effects of chronic diseases such as heart and lung problems, osteoporosis, diabetes, pain and a variety of other health problems. Clinical Exercise Physiologists can evaluate you and teach you about how to use exercise, training and rehabilitation to improve your chronic pain. They will also teach you to manage your lifestyle in order to improve the quality of your life while you live with chronic pain.

THE COMMUNITY PHARMACIST AND CHRONIC PAIN MANAGEMENT

As noted previously in this document, whenever possible, you should use only one pharmacy for all of your medications. This is particularly important if you are taking opioid medications. Your community Pharmacist will be better able to help you manage your chronic pain if the Pharmacist has a summary of all of the medications that you are currently taking.

Your Pharmacist can provide a great deal of information about your medications. The Pharmacist can help you understand the side effects that commonly occur from certain kinds of medications and possibly how to treat these symptoms or prevent them from occurring. For example, opioid medications tend to cause problems with constipation; your Pharmacist can discuss actions you can take to avoid this side effect.

If your medication is one that needs to be slowly increased or slowly decreased, your Pharmacist can help you manage your dosing schedule. The Pharmacist can be watchful for medications that should not be taken together; this is particularly

true if you have more than one healthcare provider writing prescriptions for you. The Pharmacist can be on the lookout for medications that are known to increase pain or that have more risks than benefits and can discuss this information with you and your prescribing provider. Finally, the Pharmacist can watch for inconsistencies that might occur with a prescription order and communicate with the prescribing provider to assure that the medication you are receiving will achieve the outcome that was intended.

ACUPUNCTURISTS AND CHRONIC PAIN MANAGEMENT

There are many different styles and approaches that fall under the treatment known as acupuncture. Examples of different styles include Chinese Acupuncture, Japanese Acupuncture and Korean Acupuncture. Acupuncturists strive to promote, maintain, and restore health and prevent illness. Traditional Oriental Medicine views health as a state of balance. Acupuncturists attempt to address illness and chronic pain by addressing imbalances in the body.

Acupuncturists evaluate individuals with chronic pain and then attempt to correct body imbalances with a variety of techniques. Treatment may include the use of needles, moxibustion (moxa is a cone or cylinder of downy or wooly material that comes from various plants and moxibustion is burning of moxa during treatment), blood moving approaches with the application of suction cups to the body, massage, etc.

Under Oregon law, the practice of acupuncture also includes traditional and modern techniques of Oriental diagnosis and evaluation, Oriental massage, exercise and related therapeutic methods, use of Oriental herbs, vitamins, minerals, and dietary advice. You may want to check with your insurance plan to confirm that acupuncture is a paid benefit with your healthcare coverage.

MASSAGE THERAPISTS AND CHRONIC PAIN MANAGEMENT

Licensed Massage Therapists are trained in soft-tissue manipulation for healing purposes. Myofascial (related to the connective tissue surrounding and linked with muscles) trigger point massage and other techniques have been shown to be effective for pain reduction in certain conditions. Licensed Massage Therapists can relieve both direct and referred pain by relaxing muscles, easing soft tissue compression to relieve entrapped nerves and to reduce nerve and muscle tension. All of this can reduce pain perception.

Licensed Massage Therapists can also provide relaxation massage which uses aromatherapy (the use of fragrant essential oils), music therapy and soothing techniques while manipulating soft tissue. Relaxation massage may help restore mind-body balance and activate the body's relaxation response which can reduce the perception of pain. You may want to check with your insurance plan to confirm that massage is a paid benefit with your healthcare coverage.