

Chapter 23

Effecting Superior Pain Management Strategies by Combining Technology with Tradition

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ABSTRACT

Today we are witnessing a significant rise in chronic diseases and chronic pain. Modern medicine appears not to be sufficient to relieve symptoms and reduce or eliminate discomfort. The following proffers the need to look at alternate strategies. In particular, it suggests that a solution might lie if we combine modern technology with ancient wisdom and traditional approaches. This chapter serves to highlight strategies for prudent pain management. “Pain is not just from physical disorders but also from combinations of physiological, pathological, emotional, psychological, cognitive, environmental, and social factors. The keys to successful pain control are the mechanisms that initiate and maintain pain.” “Now, the public and health professionals expect to control pain by using preventive and active strategies, including drugs and physical and psychosocial interventions.” (Holdcroft & Power, 2003).

INTRODUCTION

Pain is a very good servant but a bad master. – Author unknown

Everybody knows what pain is but no one really knows how to switch it off especially when it becomes persistent and annoying.

Pain is not just from physical disorders but also from combinations of physiological, pathological, emotional, psychological, cognitive, environmental, and social factors. The keys to successful pain control are the mechanisms that initiate and maintain pain. Now, the public and health professionals expect to control pain by using preventive and active strategies, including drugs and physical and psychosocial interventions. (Holdcroft & Power, 2003).

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Have we lost sight of the real pathophysiology that underlies the phenomenon of pain? Are we concentrating on the end point rather than the cause of the malady? Drugs and physical therapies don't have all the answers to pain management. Is there another way? Maybe we should take a broader look at why the pain started in the first place and then we can work out the solution to the health challenge!

BACKGROUND

Pain arises when a living tissue is injured and the tissue responds with “inflammation”. Inflammation involves a cascade of events involving cells, enzymes, cytokines and chemokines and other substances, which will initiate other secondary responses by other cells and blood vessels. Inflammation is the beginning of the process of repair and healing. Ancient civilisations used different modalities to manage pain. They used physical therapies, medicinal foods and herbs where appropriate.

Over the past century the pain and its management have changed dramatically. In this article I propose to discuss the reasons for the change in pain experience and will explore the practical aspects of pain management using the best from the “East & West”. While the scientists are dwelling deeply into the complex issues of pain and inflammation, patients in pain need help and advice now. Drugs alone cannot relieve all the pains and sufferings, surgical and psychological treatment may help some but for most, a holistic approach may help to reduce or relieve the pain and suffering.

The Role of Food for Health and Wellbeing

We Are What We Eat

If we supply our body with inappropriate or inferior quality materials, the tissues and structures so made will be of inferior quality. Deficiency diseases like scurvy and rickets have been known to cause deformed tissues and cause pain with different characters. By correcting the deficiencies these maladies can be cured. In our modern society it seems like more people are experiencing and suffering in pain. Is it because the newer generations are made of ‘weaker’ materials or is it that the pain threshold is reduced or the background inflammation in the body system has heightened? The fact that we have not been able to quantify and identify the missing ingredients in chronic pain, it should not deter us from searching for an answer by going “back to basics”. Our body is created to function efficiently and effectively when it is provided with all the nutrients it needs.

Modern Medical Model of Pain Management

In modern medicine pain is treated with analgesics and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. If the pain persists, then stronger narcotics and anti-inflammatory corticosteroids are used. Other drugs like anti-depression and anti-epilepsy drugs are often used in pain clinics to help modulate the pain experience. Unfortunately, all these medications have unwanted side effects. There is a growing awareness in the community that drug therapy is not the only way. People are looking for more natural alternatives, less harmful treatment modalities with more self-help involvement. They want to participate actively in the healing process. People are turning more and more to Alternative and Natural Therapies like physical therapies, (which include Physiotherapy, Osteopathy, Chiropractic) with stretching, mobilisation,

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