How to talk to your patients about Chronic Pain

BACKGROUND

- **11%** of Americans report having chronic pain.¹
- The CDC’s Guideline for Treating Chronic pain recommends nonpharmacologic therapy as a first line for chronic pain.¹
- 7.5% of opioid naïve patients were still taking opioids a year after their initial, short-term prescription.²
- According to recent data, established screening tools do not effectively identify patients at high risk for addiction.¹
- Due to hyperalgesia, many report a worsening in symptoms during this time.³
- Yet, 20% of Americans seeing their primary care physician for pain will be prescribed an opioid.¹
- Your patients deserve better treatment for their pain.

HAVING THE CONVERSATION

First, ensure absence of red flags necessitating emergent treatment

Establish trust¹, 4, 5, 6, 7
- Empathize with pain patient is feeling
- If reasonable, assure patient that their pain is a normal body response and will improve with therapy

Address psychological components ⁷
- Screen for depression and anxiety
- Initiate or refer for cognitive behavioral therapy

Emphasize functionality⁵, 6
- Assess extent of damage by asking about effect on daily life
- Goals are centered around regaining functionality, not being pain-free

Encourage patient to play an active role¹, 4, 5, 6, 7
- Explore several treatment options with patient input
- Weight loss, structured exercise, stretching

ABOUT HANDS ON ADVOCACY

Hands On Advocacy is an experiential learning project started by students of the Minnesota Medical Association – Medical Student Section that provides a structured opportunity for medical students to run an advocacy campaign on a public health topic of interest. We believe that doctors, nurses, and other care providers are uniquely positioned to recognize the flaws in health care and advocate for public health and policy changes to improve care. By working together with organized medicine, our politicians, our lobbyists, and our community, we can improve the state of health care in Minnesota and beyond.

LITERATURE CITED


