

pain connection

helping people with chronic pain and their families

Publication of Pain Connection – Chronic Pain Outreach Center, Inc.

SUMMER/FALL 2008

Pain Connection Completes First Program in Mindfulness Based Practices for Chronic Pain

Tired of suffering with chronic pain?
Try Mindfulness Based Practices...

This class was literally a breath of fresh air. It cleared my restless mind, allowing me to see both the darkness and the light. In the hard-earned calm, I experienced a new level of compassion for my own pain and that of others. It offered a chance to actively participate in my own physical and emotional healing through self-work and group interaction. Highly recommended.

Comment by participant in 2008 workshop

In June 2008, Pain Connection sponsored an 8 week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program for Chronic Pain modelled on the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn's program at the Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts's Medical Center. This was an intensive program to introduce mindfulness based practices as an innovative way to manage chronic pain, to increase wellbeing and quality of life for those who suffer with incurable diseases and conditions. The program was taught by Mary French RN, LCSW-C a chronic pain sufferer and Pain Connection board member, who has been practicing and teaching mindfulness based practices for 14 years after completing an internship program for practitioners at the University of Massachusetts Center for Mindfulness in the early 1990s, then called the Stress Reduction and Relaxation Clinic.

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is based on the ancient Buddhist tradition of Vipassana or "insight oriented" meditation and was introduced into mainstream medicine by Jon Kabat-Zinn in the late 1970's. These practices have become popular in many major medical centers across the United States and offer a research based way to use the wisdom of the mind to overcome stress, anxiety and chronic illness.

Throughout the 8 week program, participants are asked to devote time daily to practicing various forms of mindfulness meditation to increase awareness of what is actually happening in their bodies and minds. Through this practice, people reconnect to their bodies, strengthening natural feedback mechanisms that facilitate healing and deep states of relaxation. Exploring pain in this way makes it possible to see pain clearly as made up of physical sensations, thoughts and emotions that you can work with to dramatically reduce suffering.

In a supportive small group environment, the program helps people learn that they can influence pain levels, develop a greater level of compassion for themselves and others and work with the strong emotions of fear and sadness associated with chronic painful conditions. Starting with the premise that there is more right with you than wrong with you, MBSR provides a positive, hopeful way of coping. This is a shift from the traditional approach of reducing or avoiding pain and seeking a cure to increased awareness of pain and internal healing.

For more information on upcoming programs contact Pain Connection or www.umassmed.edu/cfm for a provider near you.

PainConnection Loses Its Hyphen

You can now reach Pain Connection on www.painconnection.org.

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September is Pain Awareness Month

MISSION STATEMENT

There are seventy six million Americans suffering from chronic pain who are not receiving the treatment they need. Many fall between the cracks in their own private health insurance, workman's compensation, and disability benefits. Others are helpless because of a lack of insurance.

Pain Connection® is a 501(c)(3) not for profit human health service agency that provides monthly support groups, training, supervision, information and referrals, community outreach and education, website and newsletter. Pain Connection plans to establish an outreach center which will provide counseling, support groups and seminars, 24 hour hotline, library with Internet access, training program, case management, advocacy, and transportation for people suffering from chronic pain. These services will improve the quality of life, offer a chance for rehabilitation, decrease the sense of isolation this population experiences and enable the chronic pain sufferer to take control of his/her condition and treatment and maintain independence.



PAIN CONNECTION®
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September has officially been named "Pain Awareness Month", thanks to the efforts of the American Pain Foundation's Power Over Pain Action Network, a grassroots organization of pain awareness advocates nationwide, and Pain Connection. Pain Connection lobbied the Maryland legislature to recognize September as "Pain Awareness Month" and Governor Martin O'Malley and County Executive Isiah Leggett both issued official proclamations. Chronic pain is a debilitating condition that can affect every aspect of a person's life. In September, Pain Connection support groups discussed how patients can advocate for themselves and become active by contacting their representatives to pass the National Pain Policy Bill. Dr. Michael April spoke in Prince George's County and Robert Clark, PsyD, spoke at the speaker's series in Silver Spring. Letters were sent to national and local newspapers to spread awareness about the need for chronic pain programs.

Highlights of the Speakers Series

At the June Speakers Series meeting, Attorney Malcolm Herman spoke about the Legal System, Personal Injury Cases and Pain. Attorney Herman is a member of the Pain Connection board and an attorney in private practice in Rockville, Maryland. He described the obstacles which the legal system presents to persons suffering from chronic pain following an accident, injury or illness and how these obstacles are similar, whether the claim is for personal injuries, workers compensation or social security disability. Insurance companies defend chronic pain claims aggressively, doing everything possible to discredit the claimant and frequently stigmatizing the chronic pain sufferer as malingering, magnifying symptoms or requiring psychiatric help. Attorney Herman explained how insurance companies go to great expense to hire so called "independent" doctors, who invariably state that examination of the claimant reveals no objective symptoms or that the claimant suffers from any number of pre-existing conditions. In particular, insurance companies have fought hard to deny the existence of fibromyalgia, to such an extent that to this day most physicians are unwilling to make such a diagnosis. This should change now that the FDA has specifically approved the use of the drugs Lyrica and Cymbalta for the treatment of fibromyalgia.

On August 4, Dr. Robert Gerwin, Neurologist and Pain Specialist, spoke to the Montgomery County Support Group about Fibromyalgia. Dr. Gerwin described the signs and symptoms as: widespread body pain in the neck, shoulders, back, arms and legs; muscle tenderness, soreness, flu-like aching, poor sleep, fatigue, memory problems and dull pain in muscles, tendons and ligaments. Irritable Bowel syndrome, migraines and Chronic Fatigue are closely associated with this condition. Dr. Gerwin talked about the importance of a thorough evaluation, examination of the tenderpoints in the four quadrangles of the body and listening carefully to the patient.

(continued on page 3)

CHRONIC PAIN SUPPORT GROUPS CALENDAR

Montgomery County Support Group Dates - 1st Thursday

Location: Davis Library, 6400 Democracy Blvd., Bethesda, Maryland
Time: 1:30 - 3 PM

Prince George's County Support Group Dates - 2nd Wednesday

Location: Rexford Place, 9885 Greenbelt Road, Lanham, MD
Time: 1:30 - 3 PM

Anne Arundel County Support Group Dates- 2nd Thursday

Searching for new group leader

Howard County Support Group Dates- 3rd Monday

Location: 8840 Stanford Blvd., Suite 4300 Columbia, MD
Time: 1- 2:30 PM Call: 301-873-3959(Mary French)

Baltimore County Support Group Dates-4th Tuesday

Location: Pikesville Library, 1301 Reistertown Road, Pikesville, MD
Time: 3-4:30PM Call: 410-465-5499(Rosalie Kosloff)

For Your Comfort Bring Your Pillows, Mats, Ice or Hot Packs!

Speakers Series (continued from page 2)

A diagnosis of fibromyalgia involves pain lasting for at least three months, the above symptoms and eleven out of the eighteen tenderpoints need to present. Dr. Gerwin noted that there are more than eighteen tenderpoints in the body, but the noted eighteen tenderpoints have been adopted by the medical community for standardization. It is highly important to distinguish between myofascial pain and fibromyalgia because treatment prescribed for myofascial pain may actually exacerbate fibromyalgia.

Dr. Michael April, spoke to group members at the September Prince George's County meeting about treating chronic pain. Dr. April stressed the importance of a physician listening to and spending time with chronic pain patients because the symptoms are varied and complicated. "Frequently I will ask patients what they would do if they went to a restaurant and had to wait an hour to be seen, then had to wait to be have their order taken and the food was terrible. Would they go back? They uniformly reply that they would not return to that restaurant. Why is it that they continue to go back to these offices that make them wait and don't listen to their complaints? I have become more and more dedicated to trying to get patients to become better consumers and demand better care".

The question of addiction to pain medications was raised. Dr. April explained that tolerance is when the body no longer responds to the medication at the current dose and it needs to be increased to maintain the same level of pain relief. This is to be contrasted with addiction, which is a compulsion to continue use of the drug even when pain is not relieved or when it is no longer needed. Some of the addiction is physical, but it is mainly considered a psychological dependence, which can have a detrimental effect both on the individual and society in general.

Yard and Bake Sale

Pain Connection volunteers helped make this August event successful by baking and donating household goods, clothing, books, CD's and toys. Money raised will go towards funding the support groups and speakers series.

2008 SPEAKERS SERIES

- June 23 Malcolm Herman, Attorney, "The Legal System, Personal Injury Cases and Pain"
September 22 Robert Clark, Psy.D., Clinical Psychologist, "Shielding Your Marriage from the Strain of Living with Chronic Pain/ Illness"
October 27 Jan Dommerholt, PT, Pain Specialist, "What Makes Pain Chronic?"
November 24 Paula Mintzies, PhD, LCSW, "Learning to Nurture Yourself with the Relaxation Response and Qi Gong"

Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center,
1000 Forest Glen Rd. Silver Spring, MD
TIME: 1.00 - 2:30 p.m

Contributions of \$100 and Over:

Nancy West
Sheldon Needle
Dr. Victor Siegel

YOU CAN NOW DONATE ONLINE !

With your credit card go to Our Donation Page. Click on either the "Network For Good" logo, which is a secure service or donate directly to Pain Connection on the Membership Page.

Thank you Volunteers!

Jeannie Broadwell, Mary Schor, Lee Blank, Mary & Clark French, Amy Brush, Nancy Magnusson, Dalia Isicoff, Ivymount School, Silber Family (Lisa, Carl, Sam, Matthew & Miriam), Sharon Hellman, Herman Family (Malcolm, Daniel & Mayan) and Ellen Moran.

Members' Forum

Pain Connection welcomes articles, poems, and drawings from members and families to provide an insight into their lives

Acupuncture for Pain

by

Lisa Marie Price, L.Ac., Dipl.Ac. (NCCAOM)

Acupuncture is a method of healing developed in China at least 2,000 years ago. Today, acupuncture describes a family of procedures involving stimulation of anatomical points on the body by a variety of techniques. American practices of acupuncture incorporate medical traditions from China, Japan, Korea, and other countries. The acupuncture technique that has been most studied scientifically involves penetrating the skin with thin, solid, metallic needles that are manipulated by the hands or by electrical stimulation. But your acupuncturist may use other techniques such as cupping, tui na, acupressure, moxa and gua sha as well. Acupuncture treatment must be given frequently, much like physical therapy, in order to be effective. It is important to follow the treatment plan the provider has created, in order to get good results. Acupuncture is generally not painful, using needles as thin as a hair on your head, and there are few side-effects.

Acupuncture theory is based on the idea that a kind of invisible energy called “Qi” (“Chi”) flows through the body on pathways called acupuncture meridians. These rivers of qi flow through the whole body nourishing every organ, every cell, every part of the body. When this flow of qi becomes disrupted—through physical or emotional trauma, poor diet, lack of exercise, infection, etc.—then illness and symptoms result. Acupuncturists use traditional diagnostic techniques, like observation, palpation, pulse reading and tongue reading, as well as some more modern ones, like electro-meridian testing. They use these to determine where the flow of qi is disrupted. A treatment is then designed to restore the flow of qi.

From a western, scientific point of view, it is not clear exactly what qi is, but there is evidence that it is electro-magnetic radiation. For example, if you take a machine that measures electrical resistance and run it along the skin, the acupuncture points have decreased resistance (meaning increased electrical conductivity) compared to the surrounding skin. Because western medicine has focused on the chemical nature of the body, we don't know much about the electro-magnetic nature of the body. A great book to read more about this is *The Body Electric* by Dr. Robert Becker.

Most acupuncturists in this country have completed Master's degree programs, which is the current entry-level degree norm. These are full-time nationally-accredited, State Board of Education approved programs that often confer a 90+ credit degree (which is closer to a doctoral degree than most master's programs which have only 30 credits). If you are seeking an acupuncturist, you want to ensure that he/she is both state-licensed and national board certified through the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine. The NCCAOM website has a list of Diplomates with a search feature at www.nccaom.org.

You can also do a search on www.acufinder.com. Please be aware that in many states medical doctors, chiropractors and physical therapists may practice acupuncture or “dry needling” with very little, if any, training. While some of these practitioners have a passion for the medicine and become excellent acupuncturists, there are many who are simply not very skilled. Medical doctors have created a new form of acupuncture they call “medical acupuncture” where needles are inserted into the area of pain without doing a traditional diagnosis, using traditional techniques or even using acupuncture points.

Lisa can be contacted at www.healthpointemd.com and (240)780-9130

An individual can prevent damage to one's body. Responsibility and loving one's self is necessary to survive in this world.
Jayne Gandler, Montgomery County group member