In Case You Missed It: Revisiting How We Treat Chronic Pain

Op-ed article recently authored by John Boll, DO, FAAFP, Associate Director for Williamsport Family Medicine Residency, UPMC Susquehanna.

More than 100 million people in the United States suffer from chronic pain. In trying to lower persistent pain, our society has relied heavily on opioid pain killers, which carry a higher risk for addiction and have contributed to today’s opioid abuse crisis. According to the CDC, nearly 2 million Americans are dependent on or abusing prescription opioids, with more than half of all U.S. opioid overdoses involving a prescription opioid. In 2015, the number of overdose deaths from prescription opioids exceeded 15,000.

Rather than simply focusing on short-term pain relief through opioids, patients and physicians must place new emphasis on chronic pain prevention, increased mobility, and whole-body health.

Chronic pain management can take a cue from other chronic diseases, namely, diabetes. Affecting over 30 million Americans, a new plan of action was needed to prevent the further rise of diabetes and to better care for those with the disease. Diabetes management has shifted its focus to prevention by identifying those at risk for developing the disease and then taking steps to reduce their risk. Likewise, instead of waiting to treat pain once it’s become chronic, you should expect your doctor to encourage healthy behaviors that reduce risk for the injuries and illnesses that often cause chronic pain: wearing seatbelts to prevent whiplash, addressing mental health, quitting tobacco, proper lifting techniques to avoid back strain, annual physicals, structured exercise and preventive blood screenings to catch problems early.

In patients already diagnosed with diabetes, physicians now employ several different types of treatment and focus on improving the health of the entire person through lifestyle changes. This comprehensive, whole-body approach is much more effective for treating diabetes than simply prescribing medications alone, and the same is true in chronic pain patients. Likewise, instead of relying solely on strong opioid medications to treat intense chronic pain, physicians should also look to physical rehabilitation, diet and exercise, mental wellness, and alternative pain relief methods.

This need for change could not be more important. Every day, more than 650,000 opioid prescriptions are given, and the length of time patients are on those prescriptions greatly impacts their addiction risk. The CDC has found that people who take opioids for more than a week or require a refill are twice as likely to still require opioids within one year. Long-term opioid use for chronic pain results in a one-in-four chance of becoming addicted. As a result, UPMC Susquehanna has been actively revising its opioid prescription guidelines: for 3 days or less for emergency room visits, and three-to-seven days for new outpatient prescriptions.

While many circumstances call for a change in approach by patients and doctors, opioids remain appropriate for certain conditions, such as cancer, severe chronic diseases, and end-of-life care, but it is vital to educate providers, patients, and family members on their individual risks and understanding opioid prescriptions.

While physicians play a key role in managing opioid use from a clinical standpoint, there are also important steps community members can take to address opioid addiction in their own communities.

What can you do to combat this epidemic in your own community?

- Discuss: Pain management does not equal an opioid medication. Ask your doctor how you can avoid taking opioids for pain and talk to your doctor about non-opioid pain treatments. If you are already on opioids long-term, develop a shared plan for how to decrease or transition off of these medications as quickly as possible. Make informed decisions about your healthcare and address your concerns.
- Understand: Addiction is a disease. People sometimes write off mental or behavioral health problems as a choice or character flaw, but drug addiction is a chronic disease, which needs ongoing treatment.
- Engage: Ask your community leaders what you can do to help, and get involved with local task forces to spread awareness, hope and support to people who are hurting. Take advantage of medication take-back programs through your police department to get unused opioids out of your home.
- Train: Educate yourself on the use of naloxone and its role in reversing overdoses related to opioids like pain killers and heroin.
- Seek Help: If you or someone you know is currently suffering with opioid addiction, you are not alone. Seek support without judgment from one of PA’s treatment programs by contacting 1-800-662-HELP or pa.gov/opioids.

To truly stop this epidemic and ensure patients receive the treatment they need, it will take a cultural shift in our society’s approach to pain management and de-stigmatizing addiction.

Deadline for CURRENTS Articles is noon each Wednesday a week prior to publication date. Email articles to CURRENTS@susquehannahealth.org or interoffice mail to CURRENTS — WRMC/Marketing.
Healthy Resources Offered at Williamsport

Service partners are invited to stop by the Health & Wellness Fair tomorrow from 8 am – 3 pm in the Walnut Conference Room, WRMC.

The event will feature vendors, free chair massages, health screenings, education and wellness information. Vendors include Health & Wellness Educators, Delta Dental, Williamsport YMCA, the Cancer Center, and more!

All attendees can enter to win door prizes and giveaways. Stop by the Health Fair Information table for details. No registration is required, and the event is open to all service partners.

For more information, please contact Jerrod Ferrence at 570-321-1743.

Free Cholestech Clinics for Service Partners

Employee Health & Wellness is offering free Cholestech Clinics for all service partners and spouses. The clinics test cholesterol (total cholesterol, HDL, LDL) and blood sugar (fasting glucose).

Service partners can participate in two free Cholestech Clinics per year (unless otherwise directed by a care provider). Appointments are in limited availability and are required.

Appointments must be scheduled at least 48 hours in advance through WorkforceHealth.com. Registration is required.


The health survey is free and not mandatory. Click “I only want to schedule my appointment” to schedule your Cholestech appointment.

- You must fast 12 hours prior to appointment.
- Appointments are scheduled in 15-minute blocks. Due to the nature of the test and required timing, late arrivals may be asked to reschedule.

Clinics Schedule

- Wednesday, September 6 – 6 am to noon
  - Williamsport Regional Medical Center
  - Employee Health
- Friday, September 8 – 6 am to noon
  - Muncy Valley Hospital
  - Multi-Purpose Room
- Tuesday, September 12 – 6 am to noon
  - Soldiers + Sailors Memorial Hospital
  - Cedar Conference Room
- Thursday, September 14 – 6 am to noon
  - Divine Providence Hospital
  - Dining Room A

Submit Your Safety Suggestions

Service partners are invited to submit their safety suggestions to Risk Management via the intranet. Submissions will be reviewed by the Service Partner Safety Team, who will recommend the next steps for consideration. Submissions may be left anonymously.

To submit your idea, select Risk Management under Departments and click on Safety Suggestions.

Student Athletes Compete for Champions Cup

Student athletes at regional schools will all be playing for a new award this school year. In recognition to the continued partnership between UPMC Susquehanna and school districts throughout the region, we have established a new award to recognize the most excellent athletes at a partner school. Teams and school districts through northcentral Pennsylvania will compete for the inaugural Champions Cup.

“Our Sports Medicine staff are honored to serve student athletes, coaches, and athletic directors in our local school districts by providing health care that keeps them performing to the best of their abilities,” said Mike Ludwikowski, Outreach Athletic Training Supervisor. “Our staff takes pride in serving all their athletes, and gets excited and enjoys their athletes’ successes.”

Nineteen schools from Clinton, Lycoming, Northumberland, Sullivan, and Tioga Counties are participating throughout the 2017-18 school year. Each school’s athletic director selected up to 10 teams from each seasonal sport (five boys teams, five girls teams) that have the potential to achieve a PIAA district or state championship (A to 6A). Each team or individual athlete, depending on the sport, is then awarded points based on how they finish in district and state level competitions.

At the end of the 2017-18 school year, student athletes and school representatives will be invited to a special recognition celebration and the Champions Cup will be presented to the partner school with the highest score for PIAA performance. A similar award will also be on display at UPMC Susquehanna to recognize the champion school.

A special Student Athlete Perseverance Award will also be given to an athlete who was injured, rehabilitated and successfully returned to play during the season or the school year. One athlete from each participating partner school will be selected for the award by their certified athletic trainer.

For more information or to see current standings for participating schools, please visit UPMCSusquehanna.org/ChampionsCup.

International RNs Join the Health System

UPMC Susquehanna would like to welcome registered nurses Sherani Baldino (5 West), Manuel Yambo (OR), Shievy Agang (ICU), and Paterno Albas (Medical/Surgical Unit – SSMH) to our nursing team.

These nurses are part of an international talent program, Passport USA, that helps connect nurses from foreign countries with health systems in the U.S. to help address the national nursing shortage. Nurses in the Passport USA program are trained to U.S. standards, speak English, and are certified as RNs by U.S. standards. Passport USA helps set up the nurses with an apartment or place to live, cellphone, bank account, place of worship, and the purchase of transportation (if needed), as well as connects them with existing networks of foreign nurses working in that region. The program also assigns each RN an International Employee Specialist to assist the nurse in finding employment for their spouse as well as finding a school or daycare for their children.
Welcome, New Residents

The Williamsport Family Medicine Residency welcomes a new group of first-year residents who recently began their training with UPMC Susquehanna. Because of the continued vital support of administration, medical staff, and employees throughout the health system, the residents receive outstanding academic and clinical experiences that enable the program to fulfill its mission to train excellent family physicians for this community and beyond.

The new resident physicians and their alma maters are:

- **Timothy R. Hogan**, DO
  Marian University College of Osteopathic Medicine
- **Frederick J. Lombard**, DO
  Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine
- **Danielle N. Marshall**, DO
  Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine
- **Tyler S. McMurry**, DO
  University of Pikeville - Kentucky College of Osteopathic Medicine
- **Jillian E. Parsons**, MD
  Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine
- **Adriana M. Polisano**, MD
  University of Massachusetts Medical School
- **Elizabeth L. Sommerfeld**, DO
  Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine

Sign-On Bonuses Offered for LPNs and Nurse Aides

Human Resources and staff at The Green Home (Wellsboro) and Skilled Nursing & Rehabilitation Center (Muncy) are hosting recruitment open houses from 9 am to noon and 1 to 5:30 pm on Tuesday, August 29 at The Green Home, and Wednesday, September 6 at the Skilled Nursing & Rehabilitation Center. Representatives will be conducting interviews onsite, and will also be available to answer any questions.

LPNs can earn up to a $5,000 sign-on bonus, and nurse aides interested in working at the Skilled Nursing & Rehabilitation Center can earn up to a $2,000 sign-on bonus. Prizes and giveaways will also be available for attendees.

Interested LPNs and nurse aides should call HR at 570-321-3335 for more information.

Auxiliary Hosts Sale

The City Hospitals Auxiliary is hosting Uniform Sales on Tuesday, August 22 from 7 am to 4 pm in the Tower Lobby at Williamsport Regional Medical Center, and Wednesday, August 23 from 7 am to 4 pm in the Auditorium at Divine Providence Hospital. Both sales will feature a wide selection of uniforms, shoes, and accessories at excellent prices.
Helping Hands Raffle

Winners for Week #19 are:

$100 – Paula Snyder
$25 – Rodney Roeder
$25 – Paula Cummings
Bonus – Debrah Cuda

Congratulations, winners!

It’s not too late to sign up. A Helping Hands raffle ticket enters you into the remaining 31 weekly drawings, admits you to the Medieval-themed Gala on March 24, 2018 at the Acacia Club in Williamsport, and enters you to win the Grand Prizes ($10,000, $2,500, $1,000, and four chances at $500) at the Gala. You do not need to be present to win.

For more information, or to sign up, contact the Foundation Office at 570-320-7460.

For Sale

Magnavox 20” television with remote. Not a flatscreen. Works well and is in good condition. Call Carol at 570-322-9909.

Early 1900’s quarter sawn oak buffet. Base has double claw feet in the front and also has linen drawer, felt lined silverware drawer, and large three-door storage space. Removable top piece has beveled glass mirror and small shelf with scroll supports. Base is 38” high, 21” deep, and 50” long. Top is 16” high by 50” long. In good condition. Call Char at 570-220-7836.

Four tickets (Section 525) to a Pittsburgh Steelers football game on Saturday, August 26 at 7:30 pm versus the Indianapolis Colts at Heinz Field, Pittsburgh. Call Jeff at 570-809-4924

Autumn Fest and Car Show Planned for Sept. 24

The City Hospitals Auxiliary Autumn Fest and Car Show is slated for Sunday, September 24 on the hospital grounds at 1100 Grampian Boulevard, Williamsport. The Autumn Fest and Car Show activities run from 10 am to 4 pm and include hundreds of cars, special exhibits, great food, and fun for all ages.

The car show will take place in the hospital’s main parking lot. Vehicle registration will be available from 10 am – 1 pm. All makes and models are welcome; registration costs $5 if pre-registered online or $10 the morning of the event. Awards will be offered in many categories and will be announced at 3 pm.

The Autumn Fest will feature craft vendors, a pumpkin patch with hay rides, games of chance, Bingo and more. A raffle will also take place with the winners being announced at the conclusion of the day’s events.

The local chapter of the Antique Automobile Club of America (AACA), the Susquehannocks, will be holding a “show within a show” in the Wenner Building parking lot. In the past, the Susquehannocks held their own show in July on the grounds of Lycoming College. This group will be judging cars, giving out their own awards, and giving instructional presentations on how car judging is completed.

Proceeds from the event benefit the Heart & Vascular Institute.

For more information about the Autumn Fest and Car Show or to pre-register your vehicle, visit DivineAutumnFest.com.

Celebrating Our Outstanding Staff

As part of our Total Rewards, UPMC recognizes our outstanding employees with the Award for Commitment and Excellence in Service (ACES). This award honors staff from across the health system whose outstanding achievements support UPMC’s values, and our commitment to putting patients, employees, members, and the community at the center of everything we do.

Simply put, our ACES make UPMC the best for our patients, our colleagues, our health plan members, and our communities. Each year, fewer than 1 percent of UPMC staff from across the health system receive this honor.

The 2017 ACES winners will be honored at a special recognition event on Saturday, November 11 at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center in Pittsburgh.

This year, UPMC Susquehanna will be participating and the nominated staff will be announced later this month.

In the Professions

Certified Physician Assistant receives national recognition

Jennifer Shaffer, PA-C, Behavioral Health, has been nationally recognized for earning a specialty credential called a Certificate of Added Qualifications (CAQ) from the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA). Shaffer was recognized for earning a CAQ in Psychiatry, a distinction earned by meeting licensure, experience, and substantial continuing medical education requirements before passing a national exam in the specialty.

Therapist receives Active Release Techniques certification

Devin Crebs, Supervisor of Therapy Services, recently received certification for treatment of lower extremities using Active Release Techniques (ART), a patented, state-of-the-art soft tissue system/movement-based massage technique that treats problems with muscles, tendons, ligaments, fascia and nerves. The techniques for lower extremities consist of 96 protocols, including peripheral nerve entrapments. Those certified learn to treat everything from the toes to the hips.

Therapist receives ConcussionWise instructor certification

Kristin Sloop, Physical Therapist, recently received her instructor certification from ConcussionWise, a family of online concussion education courses designed to meet the needs of athletic trainers, physicians, coaches, parents, athletes, and other health care providers. ConcussionWise training covers education on the four critical phases of concussion management: prevention, preparation, response and recovery/return to play. As a certified instructor, Kristin is able to offer a standardized educational program for this population on the basic information required to recognize and take appropriate initial steps in caring for an athlete suspected of a concussion, and to help coaches, parents, and athletes understand the concussion recovery process and steps necessary before athletes return to play, as well as to help ensure that coaches, parents and athletes understand the need for evaluation by health care providers trained in the management of concussion.

Weekly Prayer Service

Pastoral Care is offering a weekly ecumenical Christian prayer service at noon on Wednesdays in the Tower Chapel at WMRC. During today’s service, special prayers will be lifted for the Pharmacy staff.

The weekly chapel service can be viewed on Channel 89.