Embrace the Stillness of Winter
Inspire a Sense of Wonder and Renewal in Your Heart

Embrace the Stillness of Winter

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Our Mission

The ACPA Chronicle is our voice to help facilitate peer support, education, and hope for individuals living with pain conditions. We strive to raise awareness among the health care community, policymakers, and the public at large about issues of living with physical and emotional pain. Our vision is to motivate those with pain conditions to seek quality care, to optimize healthcare office visits, and to prevent chronic disease. Our goal is to provide those with pain conditions the resources needed to make educated and shared decisions with their healthcare provider. *Opinions in the Chronicle are those of the Authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or viewpoints of the ACPA. Although some topics may seem controversial, it is important for the Chronicle to cover a variety of topics regarding pain. And as always, consult a healthcare professional on all healthcare decisions.*
Embrace the Stillness of Winter
By Scott Farmer, MBA

Embrace the stillness of winter, for within its hushed beauty lies the promise of new beginnings. Like snowflakes, each day is unique and holds the potential for extraordinary moments. As the world rests beneath a blanket of white, let the season inspire a sense of wonder and renewal in your heart. May your winter be filled with the warmth of cherished moments, the glow of shared laughter, and the beauty of dreams taking flight. Embrace the magic of this season, for it is a canvas upon which you can paint your most extraordinary memories.

Inspirng a sense of wonder and renewal in your heart involves cultivating mindfulness, appreciating the beauty in the world around you, and embracing a positive mindset. Here are some suggestions:

Mindfulness and Presence
• Take moments throughout your day to be present and fully engaged in the current moment. Mindfulness can help you appreciate the small joys and details that often go unnoticed.
• Practice deep breathing and/or meditation to center yourself and promote a sense of calm within yourself.

Connect with Nature
• My favorite, spend time outdoors and immerse yourself in nature. Whether it's a walk in the park, a hike in the woods, or simply enjoying a sunrise or sunset... nature has a way of inspiring me.
• Notice the changing seasons and find beauty in the unique characteristics of each, like crisp mornings with fresh air.

Cultivate Gratitude
• Keep a journal to regularly reflect on the positive aspects of your life. Focusing on what you're grateful (even the smallest of things) for can shift your perspective and foster a sense of renewal.
• Express gratitude to others around you (including strangers), fostering a positive and appreciative mindset.

Embrace Curiosity
• Approach life with a sense of curiosity and an open mind. Ask questions, explore new interests, and be willing to learn. Curiosity can lead to a continuous sense of wonder.

Creativity and Expression
• Engage in creative activities that allow you to express yourself, whether it's through art, writing, music, or other forms of self-expression. Creativity can be a powerful source of renewal.

Positive Self-Reminders
• Incorporate positive self-reminders into your daily routine. Remind yourself of your strengths, achievements, and the potential for growth. Positive self-talk can foster a sense of wonder about your own capabilities and how your story is unique and how it is still writing itself.

Surround Yourself with Positivity
• Spend time with uplifting people... if you are alone, read, listen, and learn from smart and positive people. Their energy can be contagious and contribute to a renewed sense of optimism.
• Limit exposure to negative influences, such as excessive news consumption.
The End… Or Is It Really?
By Jennifer J. Weisbrod, MS

On many a New Year’s Day, I note no real difference from the day before. The previous 365-day period concludes, and the next begins. Flipping through my uncluttered (at least for the moment) 2024 planner today, a highlight reel of key 2023 moments played through my mind. In a rather reflective mood, I realized that these memories were all being framed as “ends.” But were they really? Perhaps, I reminded myself, in the same way that one year blends seamlessly into the next, the finale of each of these significant events marked not an end but a beginning. And beginnings offer hope, a cherished commodity for those to whom chronic pain is no stranger.

Revisiting my long-standing rather end-focused mindset a few years ago yielded a few “surprises,” not all of which were pleasant. I discovered that, despite my best efforts to avoid it, I had fallen into the trap of dividing my life into two periods: before and after chronic pain. It was far too easy for me to idealize life before and catastrophize life after. But that is not an accurate picture.

Chronic pain did not strike like a lightning bolt out of the sky but instead made its unwelcome presence perceptible over time. This interloper gradually wormed its way into life, imposing a seemingly never-ending set of challenges necessitating continuous adaptation. Yet, if I am completely honest with myself, there was no perfect life before that suddenly ended.

And this uninvited and unwanted chronic pain intruder ushered in an accelerated period of personal growth, or, as I now view it, the beginning of a new and promising chapter in my life.

If we are passionate, for example, about an occupation, specific job, hobby, or volunteer activity, and physical limitations result in its loss, it is understandable, at least initially, to regard this as an end of meaningful work, mission in life, or sense of belonging. While attempting to navigate the practicalities of the situation, and cope with the emotional toll this takes, we are often compelled to travel outside of our personal and professional comfort zones. As we stretch our previously self-imposed boundaries and explore new options for productive and rewarding life experiences, we may almost imperceptibly shift from “end” to “beginning” thinking.
Inspire a Sense of Wonder
By Scott Farmer, MBA

Set Goals and Dream
• Define clear goals and aspirations for yourself. Having a sense of purpose and direction can bring a renewed energy to your life. Make and keep a schedule and document wins and losses.
• Allow dreams and envision the possibilities that lie ahead when you succeed.

The journey to renewal is a personal one. Experiment with different approaches and find what resonates most with you. Stay open to new experiences and perspectives. Embrace the beauty that surrounds you.

As you know, navigating pain can be an incredibly challenging and complex journey, and finding a sense of wonder and renewal may seem elusive. However, even in the midst of hardship, there are ways to foster moments of solace and resilience. Here’s how:

Acknowledging Your (OUR) Struggle
• Begin by acknowledging the pain and challenges that you may be facing. Recognize that your journey is difficult, and it’s okay to feel the weight on your shoulders and emotions. You can do this!

Mindfulness in the Midst of Pain
• Encourage the practice of self-mindfulness as a way to be present with your emotions without judgment. Self-mindfulness can provide a space for self-reflection and acceptance, allowing you to connect with your inner strength, uniqueness, and purpose. Bridge the gap between where you are today and where you want to be.

Finding Beauty in Small Moments
• I suggest looking for beauty in small, everyday moments. It could be the warmth of sunlight, the kindness of a friend, or the resilience you demonstrate in facing adversity. Emphasize that even in pain, there is a glimpse of beauty and strength.

Gratitude for Resilience
• Cultivate gratitude for the strength and resilience that you and other individuals exhibit in the face of pain. Acknowledge your courage and the ability to endure, recognizing that these qualities contribute to community growth in pain management.

Creative Expression as Healing
• I encourage creative expression as a means of processing and channeling emotions. Whether through art, writing, or other forms of self-expression, creativity can be a therapeutic outlet for navigating pain.

Supportive Connections
• I stress the importance of surrounding oneself with supportive and understanding individuals. Building a network of caring friends, family, or support groups can provide comfort and strength during challenging times.

Positive Affirmations
• Introduce daily positive affirmations that promote self-compassion. Remind yourself and other individuals with pain and their caregivers that those in pain are deserving of love, understanding, and healing. Positive self-talk can be a powerful tool in fostering a sense of self-worth and growth.

AND WE ARE ALL WORTH IT!
The End… Or Is It Really? Continued…
By Jennifer J. Weisbrod, MS

Over the past year, I’ve been privileged to share the journeys of several individuals who are making life choices requiring substantial adjustment. Moving to a city with no friends, family or colleagues, closing a successful business, retiring from a deeply satisfying career, and launching a first literary project all have the potential for generating “ending” thoughts and feelings. For those moving, familiar surroundings will fade in the rearview mirror. For the business owner, there will be no office to open up each day. For the retiree, the cardboard box of personal belongings has been filled. Free time away from the writing desk will evaporate for the aspiring novelist.

Not all of these people wished to pursue a new life course at this exact moment but now believe that doing so will be best in the long term. As they explained it to me, “ends” to the way things have been must be realistically acknowledged, transition should be viewed as forward progress, and beginning again can be framed as adventure.

It is completely normal and natural for memories before and after the onset of chronic pain to arise. But just like the years that move smoothly from one to the next, we can honor our past, appreciate the present with its natural rhythms of ups and downs, and entertain the beginnings sure to come in 2024.

A Message From an ACPA Member

Dear ACPA Members,

My name is Doreen. I contacted the ACPA for help recently and they were so kind and compassionate.

Since the age of 22, my Chronic Pain has placed an immense burden on my work as a dental hygienist and college teacher. For 37 years I have struggled with spinal problems, bladder, ankle, and foot pain. I’ve been unable to sleep because of my Chronic Pain, and while at my wit’s end, I reached out to the ACPA. Their kindness has inspired me to help others with pain.

As my family and friends seem tired of hearing about my pain, I want to help those who understand our struggle and reach those who will benefit from my experiences with pain.

If I can help just one person with pain, it would mean the world to me. With that said, I have decided to make the ACPA a giving beneficiary of my will.

ACPA, please keep up the great work!

Doreen
ACPA Member
Peer Support: Encouraging Personal Growth
By Scott Farmer, MBA

Start With Small Goals
• When starting an ACPA Peer Support Group, we encourage the setting of small, achievable goals. These goals can provide a sense of purpose and accomplishment, contributing to a gradual sense of renewal.
• An example of a goal would be to find one or two others with pain to discuss how to live more fully while living with pain.

Dreaming of Possibilities
• Allow space for individuals to dream of possibilities beyond their current circumstances. While pain is present, it does not define the entirety of one’s future. Encourage them to envision a path forward, even if it starts with small steps.

Supporting Each Other Through the Journey
• Remind individuals that they are not alone in their journey. Emphasize the importance of reaching out for support and connecting with others who may share similar experiences.
• In times of pain, the journey toward wonder and renewal may require patience and self-compassion. By incorporating these suggestions, individuals may find moments of peace, strength, and the resilience needed to navigate their unique paths.

Peer Support
Peer support plays a crucial role in personal development, mental health, and overall well-being. Here are several reasons why peer support is so important:

Understanding and Empathy
Peers who have experienced similar challenges can offer a unique level of understanding and empathy. They've walked similar paths and can relate to the emotions, struggles, and triumphs that others may be going through.

Reducing Isolation
Dealing with challenges, especially mental health issues, can often make individuals feel isolated. Peer support creates a sense of community and belonging, breaking the isolation and fostering connections with others who share similar experiences.

Validation and Normalization
I DID NOT WANT TO JOIN A GROUP! But peer support provided validation by acknowledging the reality of my experiences. Knowing that others have faced similar challenges helps normalize feelings and reduces the stigma associated with certain issues.

Sharing Practical Strategies
Peers can offer practical insights and coping strategies that have worked for them. This exchange of practical advice can be invaluable, providing individuals with a variety of tools to navigate their own challenges.

Building Confidence and Self-Esteem
Interacting with peers who have overcome similar pain obstacles can boost confidence and self-esteem. Seeing others succeed can inspire hope and motivate individuals to take positive steps in their own lives. Peer support creates a safe and non-judgmental space where individuals can openly discuss their experiences. This safe space encourages honesty and vulnerability, fostering a sense of trust and openness.

Find Support Groups: TheACPA.org

Continue on Page 9 >>
The Dis-ease of Disease:
My Struggle with the Constant Stress of Chronic Pain

By Randall H. Duckett

Sometimes my wife asks me, *How ya doin’? I’m fine,* I lie. After more than 30 years of marriage, we can read each other’s body language. She knows me well enough to tell when something is wrong. I understand that she worries about me, but I don’t want to burden her yet again with my true feelings.

Talking about chronic pain is like talking about ice cream. No matter how detailed the description you receive, you don’t really get Ben and Jerry’s Chunky Monkey unless you taste it. To express to my spouse or anyone else what I really experience is too complicated and energy-sapping. I mostly just say, *I’m fine.*

Most of the time, though, I am not fine. My pain is a relentless opponent, an all-consuming ache from head to toe, punctuated by severe stabs in spots like the lower back, hands, and neck. My body is a mass of inflammation because a rare genetic disease called Multiple Epiphyseal Dysplasia (M-E-D) which caused my joints to deform and has led to severe osteoarthritis. Over the years, I’ve had both ankles fused and both knees, hips, and shoulders replaced. Just call me Cyborg.

Among other emotions, my disease causes disease. The derivation of the former, as in an illness, comes from the 14th-century French combination of des, “without, away,” and arise, “ease,” so it literally meant “without ease.” That’s an apt definition of what I feel most of the time: a lack of ease or dis-ease. Sound familiar?

I envy able-bodied people who go through life seemingly free of anxiety about their movements, like climbing stairs, walking the dog, or parking far away from a movie theater entrance. These people don’t have to think about whether their next move will be painful. In contrast, I spend a lot of time sitting still in my La-Z-Boy, about the only place I feel comfortable, but still the aches and pains lurk in the background. In lighter moments, I imagine launching a lifestyle brand called “Sedentary: For Those Who Hurt Too Much to Move.”

I hurt, but my discomfort goes beyond body pain to psychological distress. The constant worry makes it hard to truly enjoy life. I spend so much time and energy enduring the physical sensations and considering how to mitigate them that I often cannot think straight. I can’t turn it off. It’s an irritating, deeply frustrating buzz in my body.

I—and you, if you have chronic pain every moment of the day—live in a state of distress and anxiety. For me, it’s like having persistent tinnitus, also called ringing of the ears. It’s a constant hum of hurt. My chronic pain is a continuing companion messing with my mind.
How to Start An ACPA Peer Support in Your Community
By Scott Farmer, MBA

Peers can serve as role models for personal growth, healthy coping skills, and/or recovery. Witnessing others overcome challenges can inspire individuals to set and achieve their own goals, promoting a sense of empowerment.

Promoting Mental Health and Well-Being
Peer support is a key component in promoting mental health and well-being. It contributes to the development of a supportive network that helps individuals cope with stress, manage emotions, and maintain a positive outlook on life.

Enhancing Social Skills:
Interacting with peers provides an opportunity to practice and enhance social skills. This can be particularly beneficial for individuals who may be struggling with social anxiety or have difficulty connecting with others.

Long-Term Recovery and Maintenance:
Peer support is not only beneficial during times of crisis but is also important for long-term recovery and maintenance of well-being. Continued connection with a supportive community can provide ongoing encouragement and reinforcement.

Empowerment and Shared Decision-Making
Peer support empowers individuals to actively participate in their own decision-making processes. It encourages autonomy and allows individuals to make informed choices based on shared experiences and insights. It is a powerful tool in promoting mental health, personal growth, and resilience. The shared understanding, empathy, and practical assistance that peers provide create a foundation for individuals to navigate challenges and build a fulfilling life.

See the Big Picture of the ACPA
ACPA Facilitators strive to See the Forest Through the Trees. We use this phrase to describe the challenges of pain management that we the people with pain and the clinicians that treat pain face everyday... yearning to navigate our way to a better future. For ACPA facilitators, there comes a time where the big picture becomes clear, and we work to help our communities strive in spite of pain. If every tree in the forest represents one pressing issue in pain management, it becomes overwhelming and seemingly impossible to find solutions. However, when we work together, we can divide and conquer the forest as a whole. Knowing that you are not alone in this battle is the mission of ACPA peer support groups.

ACPA facilitators are self-starting leaders that help conduct peer support groups for others in pain. Facilitators are people so close to the pain situation, that they can see the big picture objectively and can help others discuss healthy coping strategies.

If you are ready to step back and look at the situation as a whole, and lead others to find ways to live more fully while dealing with pain conditions, then by all means join the ACPA mission... the ACPA welcomes your leadership.

Follow these 6 steps to become a facilitator:
1. Review and follow the ACPA Facilitator Guidelines Click Here
2. Learn and practice the Ten Steps from Patient to Person Click Here
3. Review and follow the ACPA Fundraising Policy Click Here
4. Review and follow the ACPA Nondiscrimination/Anti-Harassment Policy Click Here
5. Review and follow the Drug and Procedure Discussion Policy Click Here
6. Take the ACPA Prospective Facilitator Screening Click Here
The Dis-ease of Disease Continued
By Randall H. Duckett

There’s science behind these feelings. Brian Distelberg, Ph.D, MA, and Director of the Behavioral Health Institute at Loma Linda University Health, explains: “When someone experiences pain, the body releases anxiety and stress hormones. This can come in handy if a person is injured or in a situation where they need to get out. However, when we look at an individual who is constantly experiencing pain, then their body is also constantly producing these toxic hormones as well. Stress isn’t an intangible thing—it’s a damaging chemical to the body when prolonged.”

This damage interferes with my life in multiple ways.

For example, my body and mind are in perpetual distress. My jaw constantly clenches, bracing against the pain. My muscles are always taut, ready to spring into action, even when I’m not moving. My stomach and GI tract roll with worry about what’s to come—in the short term, with the next step, and in the long term, with how much worse I’ll be as I age. My brain is on guard all the time, causing me to wince when nerves send it pain signals. I get nightly stress headaches right behind my forehead. I imagine that’s all due to those stress hormones flowing through me, heightening my overactive Spidey-sense.

In short, I am in a perpetual state of fight, flight, or freeze—an ancient instinct that saved humans from threats such as lions, tigers, and bears (oh my). When I walk with my HurryCane (“As Seen on TV”), I look down for hazards, calculating my next step, and fretting that taking it will sting. You can miss a lot of life when you’re always looking down.

I struggle to relax, which is kind of an oxymoron because you can’t force yourself into a state of bliss. I can’t just talk myself into taking it easy, despite years of therapy focused on reframing my thinking. Perhaps you feel the same. I’ve tried meditation and deliberate breathing to no avail; the anxiety prevents me from quieting my mind. It’s like anticipating a jump scare in a Halloween movie: Pain stalks me like Michael Myers. On the worst days, which thankfully don’t happen often, this fear leads to depression (see Chronicle Spring 2023), hopelessness, and despair.

Battling pain means that I’m sometimes not as present for my family as I’d like to be. When my wife tells me about her day shuttling our toddler granddaughter around town, I try to pay close attention, but am many times dragged away by my painful body and preoccupied mind. She loves me and I love her, but my distraction creates distance between us. I apologize to her and the rest of my family for not always being there for them.

Pain-related stress makes each day a crap shoot. Yours too? I’m grateful that I can sleep at night, with drugs, and unconsciousness wipes the pain away. But in the morning, there it is again. I never know what I’m going to get when I wake up. This mystery keeps me on endless edge: How will this day go? Chronic pain patients in support groups I attend talk about having “good days” and “bad days.” I don’t say that. I have bad days and those that are less bad.

Forgive me for complaining. I really haven’t given up. I continue to fight. But I spend so much physical and mental energy enduring the pain that I sometimes have little left over for anything else. The thing besides health and happiness for my family that I want most in life: peace of mind. The thing I cannot ever have because of my dis-ease: peace of mind.

Don’t worry. I’m fine.
Brittany Tells the Story of...

- A Blue-Collar Hard-Working Man that Suddenly is Faced With Chronic Pain
- The Bureaucracy of Pain Management
- Becoming the Caregiver for Mike
- A Single Parent, that is facing intimate questions of meaning and self
- What Happens When Access to Quality Care is Not Found

One of Many (acpanow.com)
JOIN US!
Back Pain
By Scott Farmer, MBA

If you're experiencing back pain, it's essential to consult with a healthcare professional (HCP) for a proper diagnosis and treatment plan tailored to your specific situation. Back pain can have various causes, and a HCP can help identify the underlying issue. Like a lot of us, we have asked multiple HCPs for help with our back pain... with minimal results. However, believe it or not there are new advances in treating back pain. So, although some of us may have been disappointed in the past, it’s worth seeking quality care!

Some common causes of back pain include:

Muscle or ligament strain: Overexertion, improper lifting, or sudden movements can lead to strains in the muscles or ligaments of the back.

Herniated disc: The discs between the vertebrae can bulge or rupture, causing pressure on the nerves and resulting in pain.

Degenerative disc disease: As we age, the discs in the spine can degenerate, leading to pain and discomfort.

Spinal stenosis: This is a narrowing of the spinal canal, which can put pressure on the nerves and cause pain.

Osteoarthritis: The breakdown of cartilage in the joints can affect the spine and result in back pain.

Sciatica: Compression or irritation of the sciatic nerve can cause pain that radiates down the leg from the lower back.

Besides Visiting an HCP, consider these simple tips to help manage and prevent back pain

Maintain good posture: Practice proper body mechanics when sitting, standing, and lifting.

Stay active: Regular exercise, including activities that strengthen the core muscles, can help support the spine.

Use ergonomics: Ensure that your work environment, including desk and chair height, is conducive to good posture.

Lift correctly: When lifting heavy objects, use your legs rather than your back, and avoid twisting while lifting.

Maintain a healthy weight: Excess weight can put strain on the back, so maintaining a healthy weight can help reduce the risk of back pain.

ATTENTION HCPs
CME
Interventional Pain Management: Back Pain
Click Here

Remember, it's crucial to consult with a HCP to determine the cause of your back pain and receive appropriate treatment. They may recommend physical therapy, medication, lifestyle changes, or other interventions based on your specific situation.
People with pain can play an important role in the development of new therapies by taking part in clinical trials. Find a listing of IRB-approved clinical trials that might be of interest to you at www.ACPANow.com/research/. New trials are posted often, so check back regularly.

Current Research Studies
- Knee Osteoarthritis
- Cannabinoids
- Fibromyalgia
- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Dermatomyositis
- Anxiety and Pain
- Opioids and Alcohol

FDA Study on the Use of Digital Health Technologies for Opioid Use Disorder
FDA is funding a study to learn about how digital health technologies (e.g., apps, programs, or devices that are used for monitoring, tracking, or providing education about health topics) can be used to help people with opioid use disorder (OUD) manage their condition. As part of this study, a researcher from RTI International (www.rti.org) will conduct a focus group with people who have been diagnosed with OUD and are either currently or have recently been in treatment for OUD. The discussion will take place over Zoom, an online video platform and will last 90-minutes. In appreciation of your time, you will receive a $75 gift card after the discussion.

To see if you qualify, please click the link below to complete a short survey.
https://redcapedc.rti.org/ccs/surveys/?s=NEMDxDWL79MTYw3A
If you have any questions, please contact the study team at 877-212-7218 or FDADigitalHealthTechnologies@rti.org.
Hello fellow Clinicians who treat pain. This past August the ACPA conducted The ACPA Inspire Pain Freedom CME Conference. I was able to attend in-person and it was a fantastic learning experience. The presentations helped my practice specifically by covering common chronic pain conditions and challenges associated with managing Chronic Pain. We discussed evidence based interventions available for chronic pain patients, medications, behavioral health, and many other clinical pearls. I was able to immediately incorporate this education into my practice. Now they are online for everyone.

-Thanks ACPA!

CME Opportunities for HCPs
By Sandra Jamison, MD

**CME**
**Opioids for Chronic Pain in 2023**
[Click Here]

**CME**
**Nerve Pain and Painful Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy**
[Click Here]

**CME**
**Interventional Pain Management: Back Pain**
[Click Here]

**CME**
**Behavioral Health and Pain**
[Click Here]

Upcoming Topics
Buprenorphine
Compassion
Migraine and more...
Painful Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy
By Scott Farmer, MBA

Painful Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy (PDPN) is a common complication of diabetes, and its prevalence increases with the duration of diabetes. According to the American Diabetes Association (ADA), about half of people with diabetes will develop some form of neuropathy. However, the risk of developing neuropathy can vary depending on factors such as blood sugar control, genetics, and other health conditions.

There are several types of diabetic neuropathy, and they can affect different parts of the body, including the nerves that control sensation and those that control various bodily functions. Some people with diabetic neuropathy may experience symptoms such as numbness, tingling, or pain in the extremities, while others may have problems with digestion, heart rate, or blood pressure.

It’s important for individuals with diabetes to manage their blood sugar levels effectively, as good glucose control can help prevent or slow the progression of diabetic neuropathy. Regular check-ups with HCPs and early intervention can also play a crucial role in managing and treating diabetic neuropathy.

Don’t Be Embarrassed of Your Feet!
HCPs respect patients who are engaged in their healthcare. If you notice changes in your feet, don’t hesitate to show your HCP.

Management of PDPN may involve:

1. Blood sugar control: Keeping blood sugar levels within a target range is crucial in preventing and managing PDPN.
2. Medications: Various medications may be prescribed to help manage pain associated with PDPN. These can include anticonvulsants, antidepressants, and medications specifically designed to address nerve pain.
3. Physical therapy: Physical therapy may be recommended to help improve strength, balance, and coordination, and to alleviate pain.
4. Foot care: Proper foot care is essential for individuals with PDPN to prevent complications such as infections and ulcers.
5. Lifestyle changes: Adopting a healthy lifestyle, including regular exercise, a balanced diet, and avoiding tobacco and excessive alcohol use, can contribute to overall well-being and may help manage symptoms of PDPN.

It’s important for individuals with diabetes and symptoms of neuropathy to work closely with their HCP team to develop a personalized treatment plan. If you or someone you know is experiencing symptoms of PDPN, it’s crucial to consult with a HCP for proper evaluation, guidance, care, and follow-up visits.

Do You Have PDPN?
Access ACPA Painful Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy Resources
CLICK HERE

CME
Nerve Pain and Painful Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy
Click Here
Compassion Within Healthcare
By Scott Farmer, MBA

Medical compassion refers to the empathetic and caring attitude healthcare professionals (HCPs) adopt when interacting with patients. It involves understanding and responding to the physical, emotional, and psychological needs of individuals who are experiencing illness or seeking medical care. Compassionate healthcare is essential for fostering trust, reducing anxiety, and improving the overall patient experience.

Key aspects of medical compassion include:

**Empathy:** HCPs strive to understand your emotions and perspectives. This involves actively listening to your concerns, acknowledging our feelings, and demonstrating a genuine understanding of your pain condition.

**Respect:** Compassionate care involves treating you with dignity and respect, regardless of your background, beliefs, or condition. It emphasizes the importance of valuing each patient as a unique individual. **THIS GOES BOTH WAYS!** When you show respect and an active role in your health, the more likely the HCP/Patient bond will form productive and evolving outcomes.

**Communication:** Effective and compassionate communication is crucial in healthcare. This includes providing clear and understandable information about diagnoses, treatment options, and prognosis. It also involves encouraging open dialogue, addressing questions, and involving patients in decision-making. It is very important you document your progress for your HCP as well.

**Support:** Compassionate HCPs offer emotional support to patients and their families. This can involve providing reassurance, offering a compassionate presence, and helping individuals cope with the challenges associated with disease and/or pain conditions.

**Cultural Competence:** Understanding and respecting the cultural background of patients is an integral part of medical compassion. HCPs and Patients should be sensitive to cultural differences, beliefs, and practices that may impact your health and well-being.

**Patient-Centered Care:** Compassionate care places the patient at the center of the healthcare process. This approach considers your preferences, values, and goals when making medical decisions, fostering a partnership between you and the healthcare team.

**Advocacy:** Compassionate HCPs act as advocates for their patients, ensuring that their needs and preferences are communicated and respected within the healthcare system. This can involve coordinating care, addressing barriers to access, and promoting patient rights. Overall, medical compassion is a holistic approach to healthcare that recognizes the interconnectedness of physical, emotional, and social aspects of well-being. It contributes to a positive patient experience, enhances therapeutic relationships, and promotes better health outcomes.
The Importance of Caregivers
By Scott Farmer, MBA

Caregivers play a crucial role in supporting individuals who may be dealing with health challenges and pain conditions. Whether caring for someone with chronic pain, recovering from surgery, or managing a condition like diabetic neuropathy, there are several important things caregivers can do to provide effective and compassionate care:

**Educate Yourself:** Learn as much as you can about the person's condition, treatment plan, and any medications they may be taking. This knowledge will help you better understand their needs and communicate effectively with healthcare professionals.

**Communicate Openly:** Foster open and honest communication with the person you are caring for. Encourage them to express their feelings, concerns, and preferences. Listen actively and be supportive.

**Create a Supportive Environment:** Make the living space safe, comfortable, and conducive to the person's well-being. Ensure that any necessary medical equipment is readily accessible.

**Assist with Daily Activities:** Help with daily tasks that may be challenging for the individual, such as bathing, dressing, and grooming. Be attentive to their needs and provide assistance as required.

**Administer Medications:** If applicable, ensure that medications are taken as prescribed. Keep track of medication schedules and any potential side effects. Communicate with healthcare professionals if there are concerns.

**Encourage Independence:** Support the person's independence as much as possible. Encourage them to participate in activities they enjoy and can safely manage.

**Coordinate Healthcare:** Assist in scheduling and attending medical appointments. Keep track of important health information, such as test results and upcoming treatments.

**Provide Emotional Support:** Offer a listening ear and emotional support. Managing a health condition can be challenging, and having someone to talk to can make a significant difference.

**Promote Healthy Lifestyle Choices:** Encourage a balanced diet, regular exercise, and other healthy habits that align with the person's medical needs.

**Take Care of Yourself:** Caregiving can be demanding, so it's essential to prioritize your own well-being. Ensure you get enough rest, seek support when needed, and consider taking breaks to recharge.

**Coordinate and Communicate with Others:** If there are multiple caregivers or family members involved, coordinate responsibilities and share information often to ensure continuity of care.

Remember that each caregiving situation is unique, and the specific needs of the individual you are caring for may vary. Regular communication with healthcare professionals and a supportive network can help caregivers navigate challenges and provide the best possible care. Additionally, seeking support from caregiver resources and support groups can be beneficial.

Download a Caregiver Brochure
In Memory and Special Thanks

In loving memory and honor of a great family man, Steven McKenna. With heartfelt sympathy and prayers, Eugenen, Amy (Crockett) D'Aprile, Rita, Tracey, Whynde, Mindy, John, Mary, Scott, Michelle, Betty, Andrew, and Nicole. And condolences to his wife and family-Kim Williams Author. In memory of my cousin-Kurt Schussler. For Steve McKenna. Love Catherine Hall and Family.

Grateful Tribute For Alan Ray Zanetell (1948-2023). Alan Ray Zanetelle, the beloved leader of the Colorado ACPA group, suddenly passed away on August 27, 2023, soon after the group’s weekly meeting. Al was happily married for 50 years, and he referred to his wife as his bride even when they were in their seventies. He was a devout Christian, a skilled golfer, and a fishing enthusiast. Al led the Colorado chapter of the ACPA for more than twenty years. He always made people feel welcome and loved. He treated everyone with kindness and respect - people will remember him as a “gentle giant”. He faced his ongoing pain bravely and greeted it everyday, showing an example of dealing with harsh realities of chronic pain. Al seemed to know intuitively when someone was struggling with severe depression, and he would contact them frequently. Our group in Colorado has mourned his loss as they realize that the group won’t be the same without his charm and wit. He was a fantastic leader and friend. –Mary Baldwin, Jenn Rawlings and Group

A Special Thanks To...

- ACPA donors Donald Riker, Carly Leech, Shonagh Brent, David Zabel, Melanie Demayo, Lorraine Castillo, Simply Tiff’s, Ming Gault, Netta Kaplan, Ravi Grover, Evan Shin, Claire Sims
- All support group facilitators, board members, advisory board members, ACPA staff, the One of Many Crew, and the ACPA conference faculty!
Clinical Practice Guideline

The American Psychological Association (APA) recently released a call for comments on a draft version of the Clinical Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Chronic Musculoskeletal Pain in Adults. APA is seeking comments from physicians, social workers, counselors, psychologists, health care professionals, patients and families, health care organizations, patient advocacy groups, and the wider community that will provide the panel that is developing this guideline with valuable input as it works to produce the final version.

The public comment portal is open until 11:59 pm Eastern, Monday, December 4, 2023. We invite you to read the document in its entirety and share any feedback you have. Please share this invitation with others who might also be interested in reviewing and commenting on the draft guideline.

Click on this link to view the draft guideline and submit comments:


The guideline was developed by a panel of researchers, clinicians, and community representatives that assessed and synthesized information from systematic reviews of the scientific evidence and other sources. More information on APA’s clinical practice guideline initiative can be found here.

We appreciate your time in reviewing, distributing and encouraging your community to review and provide input on the draft version of APA’s Clinical Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Chronic Musculoskeletal Pain in Adults.
Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senators Bob Casey (D-PA), Marsha Blackburn (R-TN), Tim Kaine (D-VA), and Kevin Cramer (R-ND) introduced legislation to close gaps in chronic pain research and help scientists propel chronic pain research forward. The Advancing Research for Chronic Pain Act would centralize current information and data to help clinicians and scientists more effectively research chronic pain conditions plaguing many Americans.

“Too many Americans, especially older adults, are living with crippling pain that may prevent them from working, taking care of their children, or completing everyday tasks like cooking or cleaning,” said Senator Casey. “The Advancing Research for Chronic Pain Act will ensure our Nation’s health care providers and scientists have the latest data and tools available to make progress on chronic pain and provide relief to millions.”

“With roughly 20% of our nation’s population living with chronic pain, it’s critically important that we encourage further research in this area and develop a centralized hub for Americans to access the latest information,” said Senator Blackburn. “This bipartisan legislation will equip the CDC to pull together existing resources and identify gaps where more research is needed to better inform chronic pain patients, clinicians, and scientists.”

“Many Americans live with chronic pain, which can interfere with daily life. We must do more to support people,” said Senator Kaine. “By improving data collection and data sharing, the Advancing Research for Chronic Pain Act would help researchers develop better alternatives to opioids to treat those living with chronic pain.”

“For far too long, the lack of research and resources for many Americans who suffer from chronic pain has prevented patients from receiving the care they need,” said Senator Cramer. “It’s time to put those chronic pain patients first by encouraging publicly available research and best practices to advance the quality of treatment and support across the country.”

The Advancing Research for Chronic Pain Act would direct the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to utilize available research data to clarify the prevalence and characteristics of chronic pain; identify gaps in the available research data; develop standard definitions for population research on chronic pain; and create a centralized Chronic Pain Information Hub to aggregate and summarize available data, maintain a summary of complete, ongoing, and planned research, and translate findings to recommendations for clinicians and scientists.

Read more about the Advancing Research for Chronic Pain Act here.
For anyone in our community interested in participating in research, a new clinical trial for Dermatomyositis is enrolling across the US. The investigational treatment is an oral pill, and researchers are inviting patients between ages 18-75 who are currently on stable treatment to explore their eligibility:

https://lpcu.re/VALORStudy

Participant Qualifications:
• Age 18 to 75 years old
• No history of cancer in the past 5 years
• No current severe liver disease
• No thrombotic events in the past year
• On a stable dermatomyositis treatment for the last 3 months

It’s not always easy to know where to start with exploring clinical trial options, and the study team aims to make the process as comfortable as possible by guiding you each step of the way. If you think you might be interested, fill out a short questionnaire here:

https://lpcu.re/VALORStudy

You’ll be connected with someone on the team to determine whether it might be a good fit for you.

Note: Any personal information you fill out is secure and confidential.

With biosimilars increasingly in the news, many patients have been wondering what these medications are, how they might vary from medications they’re already on, and if they are effective at treating rheumatic disease. The ACR’s whiteboard video, infographic, and fact sheet, linked here, are meant to help patients answer these questions and guide discussion with their healthcare providers.

- Click here to watch our whiteboard video to learn more.
- For a quick overview of biosimilars, check out our five fast facts on biosimilars infographic here.
- And if you want to take a deep dive into all things biosimilars, read our fact sheet here.

Thanks for taking the time to check out these new educational tools.
Osteoarthritis Research Program

This Research Program aims to solve treatment challenges in osteoarthritis by developing new ways to help the human body regenerate its own joints.

The program, called Novel Innovations for Tissue Regeneration in Osteoarthritis (NITRO), is the first of several programs.

OA is a common and often very painful condition where bones and cartilage break down. The condition currently affects more than 32 million Americans, with numbers predicted to rise as the population ages. There is currently no therapy available to reverse the damage caused by the disease.

To get a better solution to everyone with OA, NITRO will explore technologies focused in three areas - injectable bone regeneration, injectable cartilage regeneration, and replacement joints built from human cells.

Through a Broad Agency Announcement (BAA), ARPA-H’s NITRO program will solicit proposals to develop and leverage innovative forms of regenerative medicine to create minimally invasive therapeutics that fully regenerate damaged joints. For more on NITRO, visit the ARPA-H website at https://arpa-h.gov/engage/programs/nitro/

The Great Now What is a feature length documentary film executive produced and co-written by ACPA member Maggie Whittum. The film is about resilience in the aftermath of a major health crisis. The documentary follows Maggie’s life after surviving a massive brainstem stroke at age 33, and learning to live with intense nerve pain. It also features several other women with disabilities and chronic illnesses who are performing artists and visual artists. The film explores how art is an invaluable part of the healing process.
The ACPA Resources

The ACPA and Stanford Chronic Pain
Resource Guide

The ACPA Clinical
Communication Guide

Painful Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy
Resource Guide

The ACPA Peer (Top Right Menu)
Support Groups

The Online ACPA CME Conference
NOW ONLINE
Dear ACPA Members,

Since 1980, The American Chronic Pain Association has advocated for people living with pain and provided them with resources. Our efforts have reassured people with pain that they are not alone, as we offer the support and the hope they deserve. The ACPA has shown millions of people in pain how to achieve reduced suffering and a better quality of life.

The ACPA understands the daily battles people in pain fight. Therefore, we continue to advocate for your rights and provide pain management strategies and tools for you, your caregiver, and your healthcare team to better understand your condition. We believe more resources are needed to provide empowerment and shared decision-making in pain management.

We are grateful for your partnership. When you support the ACPA, you help fight for people living with pain to be heard, respected, and treated equally. Your support makes the important work of the ACPA (like this Chronicle) possible, so please consider support today.

Sincerely,

Kathy Sapp, CEO
American Chronic Pain Association

If preferred, send donations by mail
Mailing Address
American Chronic Pain Association
11937 W. 119th Street, Suite 216,
Overland Park, KS 66213

IMPORTANT NOTE: STANDARD MEMBERSHIP IS FREE. EVERYONE GETS ACCESS TO ALL RESOURCES!
We Have Big Plans for 2024... and We Want You Involved. Corporate Memberships and Chronicle Advertising opportunities are available.

APPLY HERE
The American Chronic Pain Association (ACPA) is a non-profit, 501(c) (3) organization. Our Mission is to facilitate peer support, education, and hope for individuals living with pain conditions. We strive to raise awareness among the health care community, policymakers, and the public at large about issues of living with physical and emotional pain. Our vision is to motivate those with pain conditions to seek quality care, to optimize healthcare office visits, and to prevent chronic disease. Our goal is to provide those with pain conditions the resources needed to make educated and shared decisions with their healthcare provider.

Thank You for Reading!

Have a Wonderful Winter
-ACPA Team-

VISIT OUR WEBSITE!
www.theACPA.org