



Advanced Pain Management

OF ILLINOIS

New Web Site Serves as 'Educational Tool' for Patients

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Advanced Pain Management of Illinois is providing a new, interactive web site to help patients better understand symptoms and treatments.

Imagine being unable to enjoy summer activities due to chronic pain symptoms. Imagine being unable to hike through the park, take an evening stroll in your neighborhood, or go for a bike ride on a sunny afternoon. For several patients of Advanced Pain Management (APM) of Illinois, chronic pain symptoms are a constant reality that keeps them from living life to its fullest. Several patients who experience pain symptoms due to a particular illness or injury fail to fully understand the condition that causes the pain. That's why Advanced Pain Management of Illinois has put together an interactive web site that paints both a verbal and visual picture to help patients understand the source of their symptoms and the treatments that will help them live with less pain.

Pinpointing the Problem

Demaceo Howard, M.D., FIPP, is the medical director of APM of Illinois on Knoxville, specializes in the treatment of acute and chronic pain disorders. He is Board Certified in Anesthesiology, Pain Medicine and Interventional Pain Medicine. He and his partner, Justin Ahlman, M.D., are members of the American Society of International Pain Physicians.

Dr. Howard, who founded APM of Illinois in 2002, says one of the first steps patients must take to win the battle against pain is to gain knowledge about the particular disease or injury that serves as its primer. APM's new web site, located at www.apmofillinois.com, presents patients with information about conditions and treatments in terms that are easy for patients to comprehend.

"During consults, I've often found that patients develop that 'deer in the headlight' look of not really understanding

what you're talking about when you're trying to explain their condition," says Dr. Howard. "This new web site will help them to understand the medical vocabulary, the disease processes, and the terms that help describe how their pain is generated."

An Educational Tool

First and foremost, Dr. Howard says, the site is "an educational tool" used to describe the structures in a patient's body with which patients lack familiarity.

"The web site is definitely more educational than the old one," says Dr. Howard. "It helps patients understand biomechanics and how the structures (in the body) interact. The site helps patients incorporate different concepts involved with their condition, and it gives them a (medical) vocabulary." Created over a year ago, Dr. Howard says the new site has been modified over the past six months to offer patients better information. In the months to come, Dr. Howard plans to make the site increasingly interactive in order to better assist patients in understanding medical terminology.

"Making the web site educational was my main objective," he says. "The theme of the web site is patient education and simplifying the explanation of disease processes and treatment. Even patients who don't come to our clinic will be able to educate themselves about their condition and receive the needed information."

Dr. Howard says education is key to helping patients understand and alleviate the pain.

"The better patients understand their condition, the easier our jobs become as physicians," he says. "I think patients can do better when they understand what's going on. The less you understand about your disease process and treatment the less chance there is that you will have a favorable outcome from treatments. The site is designed for patients to use as a research tool."

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One of the best features of the new web site? "It's visual," says Dr. Howard. "Both patient disorders and treatments are collections of movies or video presentations that describe the disorders and the treatment processes in a visual way. The disorders and treatments are associated with a picture and a brief video presentation that provides greater patient understanding. There is also the option for patients to print materials with information about their condition, or they can just watch the movie."

The new site is extremely detail-oriented to provide both patients and visitors to the site with substantive medical information. Site users can click on a selection along the top tool bar labeled Disorders & Procedures and retrieve specified explanations of medical terminology that commonly serve as stumbling blocks for patients during consultations. The site explains such phenomenon as the anatomy of the spine (one of the common disorders treated at APM of Illinois) with an explanation of the spine's structure along the left-hand column accompanied by a visual portrait of the spine's anatomy along the right-hand side of the screen. Users may click on a link near the top of the visual aid labeled "anatomy menu" to open a drop-down box listing the various regions of the spine and vertebra. For some disorders treated at APM of Illinois, such as cervical radiculopathy, visitors to the site have the option of viewing the animation with or without narration.

The site also consists of helpful links to additional resources, including patient education sources dedicated to spine disorders and resources providing knowledge on spinal cord stimulation for the control of pain and trusted information for pain relief in the spine. Access to patient newsletters is provided as well.

Restoring Function

Advanced Pain Management of Illinois performs both inpatient and outpatient surgery and treats a lengthy list of disorders, including cancer pain, coccydynia, complex regional pain syndrome, degenerative disk disease, diabetic neuropathy, herniated discs, facet joint syndrome, myofascial pain syndrome, and post-mastectomy pain syndromes, post-laminectomy syndrome, post-herpetic neuralgia, and lumbar radiculopathy (sciatica), to name a few. (A complete list and explanation of disorders treated at APM of Illinois is provided on the web site.)

Back pain, he says, is one of the most common pain complaints. "Our site helps patients understand the disease process that contributes to back and neck pain," he says. "The loss of productivity at patients' workplaces due

to back-related injuries and spine-related disorders is hundreds of billions of dollars a year. If we can keep patients functioning better at work by decreasing pain through pain management, we can actually cut into that deficit and take a chunk out of lost productivity and function. Our goal is to restore function."

Restoring patient productivity and function, Dr. Howard says, helps contribute to the financial health and strength of Peoria.

An Evolving Specialty

After practicing Interventional Pain Management for 17 years, Dr. Howard says Advanced Pain Management of Illinois stands apart from similar practices in the Peoria area.

"Advanced Pain Management started in Peoria, and I've always been aware that (pain management) is something that has not been adequately addressed in this community," he says. "We are a comprehensive interventional pain treatment center with providers specifically dedicated to that specialty."

Dr. Howard says interventional Pain Management is an evolving specialty.

Dr. Howard says, "there are only two certifying boards for Interventional Pain Management: The American Board of Anesthesiology and the American Society of Interventional Pain Physicians (ASIPP) "We're one of only two practices in the area that provide board certified physicians in this specialty."

APM's focus, Dr. Howard describes, is to specialize in evidence-based medicine, which helps set the practice apart from other pain management centers.

"(Evidence-based medicine) is the institution of practiced guidelines and procedures that have been medically proven through clinical research to be effective," he says. "We're also the only practice to have a board certified practitioner through the American Society for Interventional Pain Physicians. The Society requires individuals to perform procedures while being assessed by Board Certified test examiners. (This process) insures the physician is competent—both from a decision making process as well as being technically sound to perform the procedures."

Advanced Pain Management of Illinois has three locations at 7309 North Knoxville in Peoria, Suite 780 in the Methodist Atrium on Main Street in Downtown Peoria, and 201 North Cummings Lane in Washington, Illinois. For more information on Advanced Pain Management of Illinois, log onto www.apmofillinois.com or call 309-692-1539