

## WHAT CAN I DO?

The Faculty of Pain Medicine is committed to supporting better quality pain management and has:

- Produced *Core Standards for Pain Management Services*, which represents a benchmark for the delivery of pain management within the UK. **We would like to ensure it is the foundation of all Pain Management commissioning.**  
<http://www.rcoa.ac.uk/faculty-of-pain-medicine/standards>
- Piloted ASK2QUESTIONS as a tool to facilitate quicker screening and identification of patients with chronic pain. **We would like to see this validated across primary care.**
- Engaged with national workforce planning submissions. **We would like to ensure there are enough Pain Medicine specialists to meet the needs of patients.**

We would encourage patients, relatives and carers to interact with their local politicians and commissioners to see how they are engaging with these initiatives.

### REFERENCES:

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The Faculty of Pain Medicine (FPM) of the Royal College of Anaesthetists is the professional body responsible for the training, assessment, practice and continuing professional development of specialist medical practitioners in the management of pain in the UK.

*The Faculty is proud to note that Pain UK are supportive of this initiative.*



# Helping People with Chronic Pain

A rallying call for patients, relatives and carers

Part of the 'Right Patient Right Professionals Right Time' initiative

## KEY MESSAGES

- A. Chronic pain is a complex long-term medical condition.
- B. Currently one quarter of the population experience chronic pain.
- C. Chronic pain isolates patients, disrupts family life and impacts on ability to work.
- D. Teams of trained specialists present in primary, secondary and tertiary care centres can help people with chronic pain manage their pain.
- E. Patients with chronic pain must have access to the correct level of care for their symptoms.



## WHAT IS THE PERSONAL COST OF CHRONIC PAIN?

People with pain that exists beyond the normal period of time expected for healing, often termed chronic pain, find themselves in an increasingly complex health service, where they can struggle to find both the pathways of care and the specialists who can manage their pain care. Pain is a common symptom of many diseases, but for a proportion of patients it may be the only symptom and so chronic pain is recognised as a condition in its own right.<sup>1,2</sup>

Pain is not only a physical condition. Though pain may be localised, severe unremitting pain impacts on social functioning, workplace roles and drains mental performance to such an extent that patients often feel depressed and isolated.<sup>3,4,5</sup> Patients can become suicidal from the burden of their symptoms.<sup>6,7</sup> Severe chronic pain shortens life expectancy.<sup>8</sup>

It is estimated that 14 million people live with chronic pain in England alone — a quarter of these people stated that their pain had kept them from their usual activities, including missing more than 2 weeks of work in 3 months.<sup>9</sup> The occurrence of chronic pain increases with age. The UK population is getting older and we anticipate that chronic pain will become a greater problem for patients, families and society. Chronic pain is not just a disease of old age, the majority of patients with chronic pain are of working age, yet 25% will lose their jobs and half will need time off because of their symptoms.<sup>5</sup>

*“The successful management of chronic pain requires seamless integration between primary, secondary and tertiary care. Patients should not be left on their own to navigate the spaghetti junction of providers, assessment, treatment and support.”*

Earl Howe, 2011 Pain Summit

## MANAGING CHRONIC PAIN

The majority of chronic pain can usually be managed in the community or primary care setting. Voluntary organisations can also provide valuable support and information to people with pain and their carers. However, when symptom control is not achieved in a timely way, patients with chronic pain should be able to access specialist (secondary) and specialised (tertiary) pain centres, where higher intensity and complex treatment options are available. Chronic pain should not be left untreated.

It is a progressive condition that will not resolve spontaneously. Thus:

**The right patient should be with the right professionals at the right time, with timely passage from one to the other.**

It is the responsibility of all clinicians delivering care to those suffering from pain to make available a route of escalating care where needed. Multidisciplinary teams including pain medicine specialists, specialised physiotherapists, psychologists, nurses, pharmacists and occupational therapists are essential to successfully manage the burden of chronic pain.

**Patients with chronic pain have the right to access pain management services appropriate to their symptoms at all stages of their healthcare pathway.**