



# Physical Therapy and the Treatment of Pain Patients

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# Objectives: Participants will

- Recognize the role of physical therapy in the treatment of pain.
- See how physical therapy can help the physician treat and manage your complex patients.
- Be able to explain what a physical therapists does in an initial evaluation and subsequent treatments.
- Be able to assess how to find a physical therapist who can help in the management and treatment of your patients.

# Who Are Physical Therapist's?

## ■ Education

- PT /BPT, MPT(experienced therapists pre doctorate era)
- Doctorate of Physical therapy
  - Entry Level – all new graduates now have to have this degree
  - Transitional – experienced physical therapist who went back to school to get a doctorate in physical therapy

## ■ Continuing Education

- Each state has it's own licensing requirements
- New Mexico requires 30 hrs. biennially to maintain license
- HIS or PHS requirements?

# What Physical Therapists Do

- A comprehensive initial evaluation:
  - Muscular-skeletal systems examination.
  - Psychosocial issues that may interfere with treatment success.
  - Functional goal setting(measurable and with time frames)
    - Patient's are the most important
    - Therapist's
  - Plan – time frames.
    - 1X/wk for 30 minutes for 6 weeks
- A therapist will treat what is found in the evaluation:
  - More then one complaint or finding
    - A therapist will help the patient decide the one problem to be treated at this time.

# What a Therapist Evaluates

- Physical generators
  - Nociceptive vs. neuropathic
  - Tissue: too long-too short, too weak-too strong
  - Joints: too stiff or too loose
  - Postural abnormalities
  - Neurotension
  - Neuroplasticity/centralized pain symptoms
    - Allodynia
    - Summation
    - Lancing
- Psychosocial generators (issues)
  - Family or cultural dynamics
  - Kinesiophobia, Fear-avoidance, Catastrophizing

# Communication with Medical Provider

- A note or copy of the physical therapy initial evaluation
  - Physical therapy assessment (DX) with ICD 9
  - Any unusual findings
  - Plan and goals
- Suggestions for the provider
  - Patient should see a mental health provider
  - Further tests needed
    - EMG
    - Sleep study
    - MRI/CT/X-Ray
  - Medication
    - Membrane stabilizers for neuropathic pain
    - Depression
    - Poor sleep

# How I treat

- Mother, drill sergeant, cheer leader, good listener
- Educate and motivate
  - Demystify pain: explaining what pain is and what it isn't
  - Reinforce what the physician is doing
    - Procedures
    - Medications - compliance
  - Reinforce working with a mental health professional
  - Ask if patient wants to work with a tribal healer
  - **What a patient's responsibilities are?**
    - Move – decrease horizontal and increase vertical
    - Compliance with program – do the exercises or activities taught
    - Regaining of function even with pain

# Active Treatments

- Very rare use of passive treatments on the first visit
- Teach that the body is going to heal the body and the therapist is
  - A coach
  - A teacher
- Teach therapeutic exercise to help the patient return to homeostasis
  - Never more than 5 exercises (activities)
  - No set repetitions – exercise during a song or commercial
- Aerobic program: walk, bike, pool

# Passive Treatments

- Joint mobilization
- Soft tissue mobilization
  - Myofascial release
  - Manual trigger point release
- Modalities
  - Hot or ice Pack
  - T.E.N. trial
  - E-stim.
  - Ultra sound

# Finding a Pain Physical Therapist

- Different physical therapy curriculums have different amounts of time spent on pain (just like medical schools).
  - All have neuroscience courses that address acute pain
    - Nerve pathways
    - Neurotransmitters
  - Understanding chronic pain and treatment strategies can vary
    - UNM > 12 hours
    - UCSF > 4 hours
- More experienced therapists may have had little pain in their academic training, but may have more interest and experience treating pain patients.

# Finding a Pain Physical Therapist

- Continuing education courses on pain subjects are important
  - The science of pain (Flor, McCabe, Moseley, Melzack, Wall)
  - Treatment of specific pain diagnosis
    - Phantom limb pain – Graded Motor Imagery
    - Fibromyalgia Syndrome
    - Complex Regional Pain Syndrome
  - Treating patients with mental health issues
- Subjects and instructors
  - David Butler and GL Moseley - neuroplasticity, centralized pain
    - *Sensitive Nervous System\**
    - *Explain Pain\**
    - *Graded Motor Imagery Handbook\**
  - Shirley Sahramn – ***Diagnosis and Treatment of Movement Impairment Syndromes^***

# Finding a Pain Physical Therapist

- Myofascial treatment
  - Release of taut bands
  - Manual trigger point release
- Movement re-education
  - Feldenkrais®
  - Alexander technique
  - Tai Chi
  - Yoga
  - Dancing

# Picking a Clinic and Therapist

- Be careful about sending a patient to a clinic with only a sports medicine emphasis.
- Often a hospital based outpatient clinic has a broader emphasis and more experienced therapist.
- Pick a therapist who has experience with pain patients or is willing to learn.
- Develop rapport with the therapist and make him part of your patient care team



**Thank you!**

**Questions?**



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