

Medical News

Fibromyalgia

Not Invisible Anymore, but Challenges Remain

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Fibromyalgia is a chronic pain disorder that affects millions of Americans and has been underestimated and under diagnosed for a very long time. Advocates and patients have struggled for years for recognition of fibromyalgia as a legitimate illness.

Fibromyalgia, as a chronic pain condition, could be disabling.

In addition to the devastating effect on the patients' quality of life, this particular condition affects the lives of loved ones and families. Sometimes, employers and coworkers are affected as well. Fibromyalgia sufferers may miss work days, and when at work, may not work as efficiently due to the obstacles posed by their symptoms.

The recent advancement in medical science may brighten the outlook of the millions of sufferers. Recent years showed growing awareness with more recognition of the illness as a widespread disabling pain condition. Three FDA approved drugs are available for fibromyalgia treatment.

Non pharmacological modalities are also available in specialty clinics.

Fibromyalgia recognition has been a multidimensional process and continues to be. For years, fibromyalgia patients have struggled and fought this battle for recognition on many fronts. Initially, patients hop from one clinic to another without receiving the correct diagnosis or management. When finally diagnosed, they may start another battle with health care community, general public and media that generally still place a big question mark on the existence of this condition.

The exact cause of fibromyalgia is unknown. It was propagated as an autoimmune disease, and recent research indicated a central nervous system disorder as well.

Millions of Americans are affected primarily women of childbearing age.

It is characterized by widespread pain, sleep disturbances, morning stiffness, irritable bowel syndrome, anxiety, headaches, difficulty concentrating, tingling sensation in the arms, legs or whole body, fatigue and multiple tender points, which occur in precise localized areas, particularly in the neck, upper back, lower back, shoulders and hips.

Fibromyalgia sufferers experience varying challenges. From chronic disabling pain, which may be associated with normal diagnostic testing, to the presence of mild abnormalities in some diagnostic testing which may not even explain the full blown fibromyalgia Syndrome. Getting through the diagnosis is only part of it.

The fact that fibromyalgia presents with many unrelated symptoms makes it difficult to fall in a specific medical specialty, and because of the complicated nature of the condition, it may not fit into a busy general medicine practice. Chronic all body pain may be aggravated with movements and adjustments. As such physical therapy and chiropractic management may not be possible with uncontrolled fibromyalgia, and the pain could be worsened.

Because of what was noted above and fibromyalgia symptoms that may mimic those of other diseases, a clinic specializing in fibromyalgia, may offer many options for evaluation and management.

Dr. Suwan is Loyola University Medical Center trained neurologist. She is board certified neurologist, who specializes in the treatment of headaches, pain and fibromyalgia. She is triple board certified, in Neurology, Electrodiagnostic medicine, and Pain medicine with extra certification in Headache Medicine. She is recognized as national speaker in headache and fibromyalgia management. She is the Director of Advanced Chicago Headache and Fibromyalgia Clinic, which is affiliated with Adventist Hinsdale Hospital Pain center of Excellence.

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