



EXPERT PANEL ON

# OSTEOARTHRITIS AND CHRONIC PAIN

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# Expert Panel on Osteoarthritis and Chronic Pain

## Introduction

The APhA Foundation recognizes that innovation is the key to breakthrough thinking that leads to dramatic system improvements. The APhA Foundation continuously searches for and evaluates the next innovation that will improve people's health through pharmacists' patient care services. The APhA Foundation has convened and collaborated with top thought leaders to discuss future practice innovation and created practice resources for the following topics: Medication Therapy Management,<sup>1</sup> Depression,<sup>2</sup> Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease,<sup>3</sup> Appointment Based Model,<sup>4</sup> Collaborative Practice Agreements,<sup>5</sup> and Pharmacogenomics.<sup>6</sup> From these discussions, ideas for new tools and innovative practice models have been successfully developed and implemented. During an environmental scan, the APhA Foundation identified a need to explore innovations related to osteoarthritis and chronic pain management.

## Background Information about Chronic Pain and Osteoarthritis

### Chronic Pain

Pain is an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage.<sup>7</sup> Acute pain occurs when a person's nervous system identifies a pain stimulus and triggers the body's response to a potential injury. Acute pain, by definition, is short-lived and resolves when the cause is identified and resolved.<sup>8</sup> Chronic pain, on the other hand, is when pain signals persist longer than 3 months or recur when they should not. Chronic pain can be caused by a variety of conditions, such as osteoarthritis, headache, back pain, cancer, neurogenic pain, fibromyalgia, inflammatory bowel disease, and chronic fatigue syndrome, to name a few.

Chronic pain can be debilitating, affecting the overall health and well-being of a person. Pain not only has a physical impact on the person, but it can also impact a person's mobility, energy, appetite, or emotions. According to the Institute of Medicine, over 100 million people are living with some form of chronic pain in the United States.<sup>9</sup> The prevalence of chronic pain eclipses heart disease, diabetes, and cancer combined.<sup>10</sup> Pain is cited as one of the most common reasons Americans access the health care system and it is a major contributor to health care costs, with treatment costs exceeding \$600 billion annually.<sup>9,11</sup> Pain has also been cited as a leading cause of disability.<sup>11</sup>

### Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis is a degenerative joint disease that occurs when cartilage between the joints breaks down. Osteoarthritis affects approximately 27 million Americans.<sup>12</sup> Osteoarthritis can affect

any joint in the body, but most commonly occurs in the knees, hips, lower back, and neck. It is estimated that one out of every two adults will develop symptoms of knee osteoarthritis during their lifetime and one out of every four adults will develop hip osteoarthritis by age 85.<sup>13</sup> People with osteoarthritis experience pain, swelling, and stiffness in the affected joints, which often leads to reduced mobility or challenges when performing activities of daily life. A primary concern for people with osteoarthritis is how to appropriately manage any associated chronic pain to minimize the impact on their daily lives. The quality of life and economic implications of osteoarthritis are sobering, with ambulatory care visits, surgical procedures, and hospital costs accounting for over \$42.2 billion annually.<sup>13,14</sup>

### **Managing Osteoarthritis and Chronic Pain**

Each individual with chronic pain has a unique, personal experience with pain. People with chronic pain often face significant challenges as they try to adequately manage their pain to minimize the impact it has on their daily life. Some of the challenges people with chronic pain face may include the inability to perform activities of daily life, identifying and accessing appropriate treatment options to manage their pain, understanding the risks and benefits of pain medications, adhering to a medication regimen or treatment plan to manage their pain symptoms, and the potential for misuse or abuse of pain medications.

### **Climate for Change**

There is a vital need to provide appropriate pain management for the millions of Americans with chronic pain conditions. Chronic pain conditions, such as osteoarthritis, can impact multiple aspects of a person's life and the impact it has will vary from person to person. For some, pain can have a physical impact, affecting the way the body functions. For others, pain can interfere with mobility or the ability to complete daily activities. Pain can also have psychological or social implications for some patients. Helping people with pain conditions effectively manage their pain and improve function so they can successfully navigate daily activities and lead productive lives is the ultimate goal and driving force for gathering a panel of experts to discuss how to create a preferred future in the management of osteoarthritis and chronic pain.

Currently there is a dangerous opioid epidemic affecting our nation.<sup>15</sup> This is a serious public health issue that must be addressed and there are significant efforts underway that are focused on curbing the epidemic. Unfortunately, efforts to reduce the misuse, abuse, and diversion of opioids can create an environment where a patient seeking treatment for a chronic pain condition may face unnecessary scrutiny and questioning, potentially creating barriers to care for people with chronic pain. These challenges warrant an expert discussion of strategies for effective health care system changes that can facilitate access to care, optimize appropriate use of medications, and improve patient self-management associated with osteoarthritis and chronic pain.

## Innovation Required to Improve People’s Health

Based on the current landscape of osteoarthritis and chronic pain management, the APhA Foundation believed it was important to convene an expert panel of top thought leaders to discuss the current issues associated with osteoarthritis and chronic pain management and identify innovative solutions that could be fundamental to transforming how osteoarthritis and chronic pain are managed in our health care system.

## Expert Panel Convening

The American Pharmacists Association (APhA) Foundation invited a group of national stakeholders to participate in an expert panel discussion on osteoarthritis and chronic pain management. The invited participants were chosen based on their expertise in osteoarthritis and chronic pain, organizational affiliation, or experiences they had that would add value to the expert panel discussion. The interdisciplinary group of experts convened on June 15, 2016, in Washington, DC. A list of the invited panel of experts can be found in Table 1.

**TABLE 1 EXPERT PANEL PARTICIPANTS**

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	TITLE	ORGANIZATION/AFFILIATION
Ben	Bluml	Senior Vice President, Research and Innovation	APhA Foundation
Kelly	Brock	Research Community Coordinator	APhA Foundation
Anne	Burns	Vice President, Professional Affairs	APhA
Laura	Cole	Manager of Care Transitions	South Carolina Hospital Association
Penney	Cowan	Founder, CEO	American Chronic Pain Association
Scott	Hamstra	Captain (Ret)	United States Public Health Service
Elizabeth	Keyes	Chief Operating Officer/Executive Director	APhA/APhA Foundation
Joan	Knapp	Founder, CEO	Knapp and Associates International
Lenora	Knapp	Director	Knapp and Associates International
Sandra	Leal	Vice President for Innovation	SinfoniaRx
Jaime	McDermott	Manager, Pharmacy DEA Compliance	The Kroger Co.
Theodore	Pikoulas	Associate Director of Behavioral Health Pharmacy Programs	Community Care of North Carolina
Daniel	Pinto	Assistant Professor	Northwestern University/ Department of Physical Therapy and Human Movement Sciences, Feinberg School of Medicine
Drew	Register	Executive Resident	APhA Foundation
Steve	Simenson	CEO/Managing Partner	Goodrich Pharmacy, INC
Alexandria	Skoufalos	Associate Dean, Strategic Development/Executive Director, Center for Population Health Innovation	Jefferson College of Population Health
Parisa	Vatanka	Associate Director Corporate Alliances/Project Development Manager	APhA/APhA Foundation
Mercury	Williams	Director	84.51°

The goal of the meeting was to convene a group of top thought leaders to discuss the current issues associated with osteoarthritis and chronic pain management. During the expert panel discussion, each stakeholder had the opportunity to describe the successes and challenges they had experienced in their practice settings related to osteoarthritis and chronic pain management. This format allowed the stakeholders to share experiences of successful practice-based initiatives and describe the barriers related to osteoarthritis and chronic pain management. The dialogue among the expert panel helped identify key issues in osteoarthritis and chronic pain management that need to be addressed.

Following the expert panel discussion, the APhA Foundation completed and reviewed the meeting proceedings and identified six key themes that emerged from the discussion. These themes provided the basis for developing key principles that could lead to effective health care system changes and improve care for patients with osteoarthritis and chronic pain. The summary report detailing the six key principles was provided to the expert panel for review. Feedback from the expert panel was used to develop a white paper that represents a synthesis of information, opinions, and expertise that emerged from the expert panel discussion. Through the dissemination of this white paper, the APhA Foundation aims to facilitate expanded implementation of the key principles for effective change that can create a preferred future in the management of osteoarthritis and chronic pain.

## Expert Panel Proceedings

### Identifying Issues in the Management of Osteoarthritis and Chronic Pain

The expert panel discussion generated a rich

dialogue among the panel participants about important issues in osteoarthritis and chronic pain management. A brief summary of the discussion is included here.

The expert panel discussed the current environment surrounding pain management. Unfortunately, a person seeking treatment for a chronic pain condition may face unnecessary scrutiny and questioning about their chronic pain condition, and this creates potential barriers to care. An environment where a person seeking treatment for a chronic pain condition may be asked to “prove” that his or her pain is legitimate before they can access appropriate treatment options creates a stigma for persons seeking treatment for chronic pain.

Another key issue discussed by the expert panel focused on the fact that the experience and perception of pain is unique to the individual and should be approached accordingly. In order to appropriately treat chronic pain conditions, health care providers must understand the ways in which pain is having an impact on the individual’s ability to function and quality of life. For example, pain can have medical implications resulting in physical limitations, psychological impact in the form of depression or other mood disorders, or social consequences such as isolation, to name a few.<sup>16</sup> Understanding each individual person’s level of pain, the impact pain has on his or her daily life, and the individual’s goals for pain management are critical to developing an appropriate treatment plan.

To develop an effective treatment plan, it is important to first understand the individual person’s needs and then determine what treatment options would be most beneficial. Developing an effective treatment plan for osteoarthritis or other chronic pain conditions should include the coordination of

care between all health care providers involved. The patient and any caregivers involved in supporting the patient should be engaged in this process from the beginning. Shared decision making when developing the treatment plan may improve adherence to the plan and engagement in self-management strategies. It often takes a multipronged approach to successfully manage a person’s osteoarthritis or chronic pain, but a person with pain may not know where to start or how to navigate the fragmented system in order to maximize their treatment plan.

## Expert Panel Recommendations

This section summarizes the key themes from the expert panel discussion and outlines a list of key principles that could lead to effective health care system changes and improve care for patients with osteoarthritis and chronic pain.

### KEY THEMES FROM EXPERT PANEL DISCUSSION

1. Improve the climate surrounding pain management
2. Maximize access to care
3. Provide support for caregivers
4. Advocate for sustainable system changes
5. Collaborate and coordinate team-based care
6. Tailor the care plan to meet the needs of the individual

### Key Principles for Effective Change

1. **Improve the perception of people with osteoarthritis and chronic pain by facilitating a positive environment surrounding the management of osteoarthritis and chronic pain.**

Millions of Americans suffer from chronic pain conditions. Often times, because of their inability to participate and function normally in their regular

activities, people with pain feel isolated and misunderstood. Caregivers, family members, friends, or co-workers may not understand how pain can impact every aspect of a person’s life. Because people with pain benefit from having a strong support system, it is important to engage and educate caregivers, family, friends, or co-workers about how pain can potentially impact every aspect of life to help them better understand what the person with pain is experiencing.

In addition, it is important to evaluate how health care providers perceive people with osteoarthritis and chronic pain conditions who are seeking treatment for their pain. While respecting the need to minimize the potential for misuse, abuse, or diversion of medications, health care providers need to be careful not to stigmatize people seeking treatment for their chronic pain conditions. Rather, they should

approach each patient in a nonjudgmental way and assess each individual’s needs to determine the best course of action. One way to create a positive environment that facilitates a nonjudgmental approach is to utilize standardized assessments that allow health care providers to quantify the degree to which pain is affecting the function and socialization of the person with pain. Using a systematic method for assessing a person’s level of pain and quantifying how the pain impacts the

person’s overall functioning, ability, and health can help health care providers better understand the needs of the person with pain.

2. **Provide patient-centered care that meets patients where they are.**

There was consensus among the expert panel that the person with pain must always remain the focus. Appropriate treatment of pain involves identifying the

needs of the patient and developing a patient-specific management plan that is tailored to meet the individual's needs. Effective osteoarthritis and chronic pain management plans should involve taking a holistic approach to assessing each person with pain to identify any factors (e.g., personal, family, social, strengths, weaknesses, motivation, support system) that may impact the patient's success.

In order to provide patient-centered care, health care providers need to involve the patient and their caregivers in developing the pain management plan. People with pain should be educated about the treatment options and involved in shared decision making when developing their pain management plan. Setting patient-specific goals that are realistic and achievable is an important component of osteoarthritis and chronic pain management. People with osteoarthritis or other chronic pain conditions should be educated to understand that the goal of pain management is to help them manage their pain and improve function so they can successfully navigate daily activities and lead productive lives. Setting reasonable and realistic goals can help manage the patient's expectations for chronic pain management.

It is important to prioritize issues and address those most critical to the patient first. Being able to consistently monitor a patient's progression toward his or her goals will allow health care providers to adjust the care plan as needed to achieve the desired results.

Expert panel participants recognized that it is important to close the gap between what is considered success by the patient versus what is considered success by the health care provider. Health care providers have measures they will be asked to meet, yet these measures may not align with what is most important to the patient at that

given time. Being able to monitor and demonstrate progress toward patient-specific goals in a consistent and reliable way may help close this gap.

People with pain should feel empowered to successfully manage their osteoarthritis or chronic pain. If they are involved in developing the care plan and understand how to implement the plan in their daily lives, they will be more likely to be successful. In addition, if patients have a mechanism that allows them to assess their own progress toward their goals, this will provide additional motivation and empowerment to continue with the plan.

### **3. Facilitate interprofessional collaboration and coordinated team-based care.**

Multiple medications, treatment modalities, and a variety of health care providers are available that may add value to the management of osteoarthritis and chronic pain. One key to success is to develop a comprehensive approach to pain management that involves an integrated, coordinated team of health care providers. It is important to capitalize on each team member's expertise and work together to optimize treatment outcomes.

When health care providers are working together to help the patient implement his or her care plan, it is vital to establish seamless flow of information between and among providers. All of the patient's health care providers should have access to the patient's pain management plan, be able to consistently assess the patient's progression toward his or her goals, and be able to communicate changes made to the care plan. While this presents significant challenges in the current health care system, considering how to facilitate communication and connect the patient to all of the health care providers involved in managing the patient's chronic pain

can enhance the patient experience and improve overall care.

#### **4. Provide support for navigating within the health care system.**

People with osteoarthritis or chronic pain conditions need tools and resources that empower them to identify and understand what medications, treatment modalities, and health care providers are available to help them manage their pain. Part of the challenge is that valuable resources may already be available, but it is often difficult to identify what resources are available in the current fragmented system. Frequently, health care providers may not even be aware of all the tools and resources in their community that are available for a person with pain. Identifying efficient ways to collate and disseminate information about the available tools, resources, treatment options, and health care providers that are available to manage pain could benefit both patients and providers.

Educating health care providers about the treatment options and appropriate management of osteoarthritis and chronic pain conditions is important. This education should not only include an overview of the appropriate use of medications and non-medication treatment options, it should also include how to appropriately assess for and address any potential misuse, abuse, or diversion. Health care providers involved in chronic pain management could also benefit from tools (e.g., clinical decision support) that help them navigate through complex treatment decisions and identify appropriate treatment options based on the chronic pain condition that is being treated.

Once the treatment options are identified and reviewed and the treatment plan is developed,

patients and their caregivers may need help navigating the health care system and accessing appropriate care. People living with chronic pain may already be overwhelmed by their condition, and trying to navigate a fragmented health care system can add an unnecessary burden to patients and their caregivers.

#### **5. Implement efficient practice level and health care system changes that are sustainable.**

To address the issues associated with the management of osteoarthritis and chronic pain, practice level or health care system changes may need to be implemented. The burden of implementing new systems should be minimized to facilitate successful integration into the current system. Any practice level or health care system change must be sustainable and include targeted, efficient approaches that can be incorporated into current workflow and scaled seamlessly across different settings.

A significant challenge in the current health care system is inconsistency in coverage for critical components of pain management, which creates barriers to care when a treatment option is available but not covered. It is critical to remove any unnecessary barriers that may interfere with a patient's ability to access a recommended treatment option. When incentives are properly aligned for all of the stakeholders involved in pain management (e.g., patients, providers, payers) and unnecessary barriers are eliminated, successful implementation of a treatment plan is more likely.

#### **6. Provide education and support for all who are involved in supporting the person with pain.**

Chronic pain can impact every aspect of a person's life, but it does not only affect the person with pain,



it also has an impact on the caregivers as well. Caregivers, friends, family, or significant others that are involved in caring for and supporting a person with pain need education and support in order to fully understand what the person with pain is dealing with. Those involved in caring for and supporting a person with pain should be educated about the physical, psychological, and social impact that pain can have on people, including the caregivers.

When caregivers have knowledge of how pain impacts people, they are more likely to approach the situation with empathy and understanding. If caregivers are educated about the medications and treatment options available to manage pain, this will enable them to better support the person with pain as they navigate the health care system. Engaging caregivers throughout the process may improve the patient experience and increase the chance for successful pain management.

Engaging the patient's support system throughout the pain management process has been identified as a critical component to the successful management of pain. Caregivers play an integral role in every aspect of the pain management process, from care planning to navigating the health care system. People with pain benefit from having a strong support system. Therefore, it is important to provide appropriate caregiver support and emphasize the importance of maintaining the health and well-being of the caregiver to minimize the risk of burnout.

## Conclusion

The management of osteoarthritis and chronic pain is complex. Providing appropriate pain management resources for the millions of Americans with

osteoarthritis and chronic pain conditions will help them manage their pain and improve function so they can successfully navigate daily activities and lead productive lives. This white paper summarizes the innovative thinking of experts and outlines six key principles for change that could lead to effective health care system changes. By implementing the key principles for effective change, we can create a preferred future and improve the care for patients with osteoarthritis and chronic pain.

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