



“Hello, this is Pain....are you listening?”

By Southeast Health Group

It is unrealistic to expect to live a “pain-free” life, and yet the quest to ease pain has become a national obsession. Doctors and nurses have been trained to anticipate and treat pain even before it happens. Drug companies have created powerful and controversial opioid medications to interrupt the transmission of nervous system impulses that we perceive as pain. Many prescription medications are now traded on the street—not to get high, but to relieve the cravings associated with addiction. All of this has led to an opioid addiction crisis across the U.S., including right here in rural Colorado.

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We can all agree that pain is unpleasant, however, it does play an important role in the body. Pain is a great communicator that you are under threat of potential harm. A severe headache can act as a warning signal that a virus is attacking you. A sore muscle might be telling you that you need to rest. Describing your pain symptoms helps your doctor understand what is wrong and how to treat it.

“When a patient describes her

pain to me, it tells me the potential cause or source of the pain,” said Dale Horiuchi, Physical Therapist at Southeast Health Group. “It can tell me if the pain is from a musculoskeletal injury (such as an ankle sprain or pulled muscle) or if it’s from arthritis (aching joint pain and stiffness), nerve pain (shooting, burning or numbness with tingling) or something systemic, like diabetes-neuropathy.”

Prescription pain killers do not provide a cure--they don’t heal broken bones, repair torn muscles or stop infections. They simply mask the pain caused by the underlying problem by telling the brain a different story about the unpleasant feeling. Long-term use of opioid drugs can lead to physical dependence, cravings, and serious symptoms of withdrawal. There are many safe and effective ways to manage pain, including physical therapy, acupuncture, electro stimulation therapy, massage and chiropractic care.

“The best way to manage chronic pain is to understand the nature of the pain,” said Horiuchi. “It’s also important to get adequate rest, as fatigue can magnify symptoms. I am a firm believer that proper diet and adequate



hydration are important. Staying active helps, too.”

The conversation about pain starts with your primary care doctor and often leads to a referral to physical therapy or other alternate treatments. “Physical therapy involves awareness of how patients walk, sit, stand, lift and bend,” said Horiuchi. “We spend a good deal of time on patient education for activities that can prevent or minimize pain through exercise. As a physical therapist, we prefer not to see patients for the same issues over and over. We educate patients in ways to self-manage pain, or even prevent the recurrence of pain.”

If you or someone you love is experiencing acute or chronic pain, talk to your primary care physician today. Southeast Health Group is accepting new primary care patients in Rocky Ford, La Junta and Las Animas. Call 1-800-511-5446 to schedule your personal pain evaluation.