

Department of Pain Medicine

Introduction to the Pain Clinic

This leaflet explains how the Pain Clinic works and will help you to get the most out of your visits.

How can the pain service help?

You have been referred as an outpatient to the Pain Clinic because you have been experiencing pain for a prolonged period of time and the pain is having a negative impact on your quality of life. We define this pain as chronic pain because it has persisted for longer than three months.

Persistent pain is difficult to understand and is challenging to treat. The Pain Clinic is a multi-disciplinary team consisting of specialist nurses, consultants in pain management, a consultant clinical psychologist and a physiotherapist. It is likely that you will have involvement with some or all of this team. Managing pain is not something that a doctor does to you or for you. You, the doctor and the other health professionals' work together to enable you to manage your pain and symptoms more effectively and so reduce the impact your pain has on your life.

Following an assessment with the consultant, a plan of care will be proposed which will contain some of the methods described below and we encourage you to work with us to take an active role in managing your pain.

How can I manage my pain?

- **Pain management education**

We will give you practical advice on managing your pain. Together we will explore the things that you can do for yourself using strategies and techniques to give you more control over your pain.

There is information you need to know about how your body works and feels pain. You will be given basic foundation skills for you to build upon over a period of time. This enables you to manage your pain and symptoms more effectively. This information is most often given in small informal groups, meeting for two 90 minutes sessions. Personal details are not disclosed at these sessions.

Unfortunately we cannot accommodate partners or carers as participants in these sessions due to space constraints.

This will then be followed up by individual appointments with one of the nursing team for guidance to explore any further issues and develop these pain management strategies.

- **Medication**

As well as conventional painkillers there are other drugs which may alter your pain experience. You may need to take these for several months but our long term aim is to help you take fewer medications.

If we have prescribed new medication we will generally review its effects via a booked telephone appointment. We will advise your GP of suggested medication changes and they will then continue to oversee the prescribing of these drugs.

- **Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS)**

This is a small portable battery-operated device, that aims to reduce pain by blocking pain signals. This works by passing a mild electrical current through adhesive pads placed on the skin. The effect is similar to rubbing an area after you bump it. If TENS is felt to be appropriate for you, we will show you how to use it and arrange to loan you a machine for a two week period. If you find it beneficial you may then wish to purchase your own machine and we can provide advice and details for this.

- **Nerve blocks.**

These are injections carried out by an anaesthetist as an outpatient at Ely Day Surgery Unit or Addenbrookes Pain Clinic. The initial injections tend to be diagnostic or information gathering and generally have only a temporary effect. Most injections will be performed under x-ray guidance. Information on specific interventions will be given prior to treatment. However, you can expect your stay for an injection to be between two to four hours.

It is not necessary to starve before an injection and it is important to take all your regular medication unless advised to omit anything by the Pain Clinic.

It is important that you have someone to take you home following treatment. Failure to do so may result in your treatment being postponed.

There is a necessary wait between injections to fully assess the outcome.

Injections are not appropriate for all our patients.

- **Psychological input**

Chronic pain has an impact on the whole person. It can affect their physical activities, how they think and feel and their relationships. Often, the people who adapt better to chronic pain are those who recognise and address each of these areas. These people make changes that help them to reduce the impact of chronic pain and to live full and normal lives, as much as possible. For some patients, meeting with the clinical psychologist, as part of the team, can help them develop a shared understanding of these issues and explore the use of strategies for managing the impact of chronic pain in their daily life.

What can I expect at an appointment?

Some of your appointments will be on an individual basis, some in small groups and others via the telephone. Please ensure we have a suitable telephone number to call you on for the telephone appointments. They are as important as a clinic appointment. The assessment and outcome of such telephone appointments enable us to plan further interventions and appointments, **without which we are unable to proceed**. Please note that hospital policy dictates that we are unable to disclose that we are phoning from the Pain Clinic unless speaking to the intended recipient of the appointment.

Before your first appointment you will be sent a comprehensive form for you to complete, which asks about your experience of pain. If you have any queries or difficulty completing it, please attend your appointment approximately 15 minutes early, informing the administration staff that you require assistance with the form. A member of staff will then see you to help you complete it.

During your first visit to the clinic you will generally be given a full physical examination by the doctor to assess the nature of your pain and how it may affect your physical function. You may find your pain temporarily increases (flares) after this examination.

- Always bring your glasses if you need them for reading.
- Always bring a list of all your current medication.
- Please inform the doctor or nurse if **you are taking or at any time start taking anticoagulants** (medication to thin your blood). Failure to do so may result in your treatment being postponed.
- If there is any possibility you may be pregnant please inform the doctor or nurse.

We ask you to complete various questionnaires which enable us to assess the continuing impact your pain has on your life and review our service care.

We do our best to keep appointments to time but hope you will understand if there are any delays.

After each visit or telephone appointment we will write to your GP to inform them of your pain clinic care. This is because they provide continuity in your care and would be your first point of contact for any advice.

Addenbrooke's is a teaching hospital and we are committed to the training of medical and nursing staff. Anaesthetic registrars and student nurses are regularly based in the clinic as part of their training programme.

If you are unable to attend for your appointment or will not be available for a telephone appointment, please contact us as soon as possible, so we can use the appointment for someone else.

It is hospital policy that any patient, who does not attend their appointment or are not available for their telephone appointment (DNA) without informing the clinic, may be discharged from this department. You will then be informed by letter of our intent to discharge you from the pain service. Please note that a copy of this letter will also be sent to your GP.

It is also hospital policy that even if you inform us that you are unable to attend an appointment (CNA) on two consecutive occasions you may still be discharged from the pain service.

Contacts/further information

Pain Clinic hours 8:00 – 17:00

Telephone No: 01223 217796

Pain Clinic
Box 215
Addenbrookes Hospital
Hills Road
Cambridge
CB2 2QQ

The Pain Clinic can be found in outpatients, Level 3.

There is a disabled 'drop off/collection' point at the main out patient entrance, where wheelchairs are generally available if necessary.

Privacy & dignity

We are committed to treating all patients with privacy and dignity in a safe, clean and comfortable environment.

In some areas, due to the nature of the equipment or specialist care involved, we may not be able to care for you in same-sex bays. In these cases staff will always do their best to respect your privacy and dignity, eg with the use of curtains or, where possible, moving you next to a patient of the same sex. If you have any concerns, please speak to the sister.



We are currently working towards a smoke free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169

Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or

patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk



Document history

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