

# Pain Facts

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## ***Did you know that?***

### **Pain is a national public healthcare crisis**

- Approximately 50-75 million Americans suffer with persistent (chronic) pain. The number of people suffering with chronic pain is higher than, and includes, those with breast cancer, AIDS, and nearly all other serious or terminal illnesses. Yet, unlike those major illnesses, most chronic pain is untreated or under-treated, and this is particularly true for African Americans, Hispanics, and other underserved groups. (The Pain Survey, Louis Harris & Associates, 1999)

### **Pain takes a toll on almost every aspect of a person's life**

- Two in five pain sufferers (42%) experience such severe pain that they are unable to work, and three in five (63%) are unable to engage in routine activities of daily living. (The Pain Survey, Louis Harris & Associates, 1999)

### **Effective pain care is hard to find**

- The majority of those suffering with severe chronic pain do not have it under control. For those who do, it took 50% of them over a year to get their pain under control. (*Chronic Pain in America*, the American Pain Society and the American Academy of Pain Medicine, 1999)
- Chronic pain sufferers have difficulty finding doctors who can treat their pain. Almost one-fourth of respondents saw more than three doctors. The reasons they cite are: doctors are unwilling to treat pain aggressively; doctors lack knowledge about pain treatment; doctors do not take their pain seriously. (*Chronic Pain in America*, the American Pain Society and the American Academy of Pain Medicine, 1999)

### **Pain takes an enormous toll on the US economy**

- Lost productive time from common pain conditions among active workers costs an estimated \$61.2 billion per year. (Stewart WF, Ricci JA, Chee E, Morganstein D, Lipton R., JAMA. 2003 Nov 12)
- The National Institutes of Health estimates that pain costs the American public over \$100 billion per year in medical expenses, lost wages and other costs. (*NIH Guide: New directions in pain research I*, National Institutes of Health, 1998)

## **Back Pain**

- Back pain is the leading cause of disability in Americans under 45 years old. Over 26 million Americans between the ages of 20 and 64 experience frequent back pain, and two thirds of American adults will have back pain during their lifetime.

## **Cancer**

- Over 70% of those with cancer experience pain, yet only 50% of advanced-stage cancer patients, who are undergoing active treatment, get adequate pain treatment. In addition, 89% of children with cancer suffer “a lot” or a “great deal” in the last month of life. Less than 30% has successful treatment of their pain. (Cleeland CS, Gonin R, et al. N Engl J Med 1994; 330: 592-596. Wolfe J, Grier HE, Klar N, et al. N Engl J Med 2000; 342:326-333.)

## **Headache**

- More than 45 million Americans get chronic, recurring headaches, while 28 million suffer from migraines (The National Headache Foundation: [www.headaches.org](http://www.headaches.org))

## **Osteoarthritis and Rheumatoid Arthritis**

- Pain is a major determinant of quality of life for people with osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis that affect more than 20 million and 2.5 million Americans, respectively. (National Institutes of Health)

## **Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome (RSD), also known as Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS)**

- RSD / CRPS is a chronic neurological syndrome that is often characterized by disabling pain. It is estimated to affect more than 1.5 million people in the United States. (The Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome Association; [www.rsds.org](http://www.rsds.org))

## **Other Causes of Pain**

- The National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research of the National Institutes of Health reports that 10.8 million US residents suffer from TMJ at any given time (TMJ Association: [www.tmj.org](http://www.tmj.org))
- The American College of Rheumatology ([www.rheumatology.org](http://www.rheumatology.org)) estimates that between 3-6 million Americans, most of whom are women, are affected by fibromyalgia, a complex condition that includes widespread pain.

## End of Life

- More than half of all hospitalized patients experience pain in the last days of their lives. (The SUPPORT Principle Investigators. A controlled trial to improve care for seriously ill hospitalized patients: the study to understand prognoses and preferences for outcomes and risk of treatments (SUPPORT). JAMA 1995; 274:1591-1598)
- Half of almost 500 terminally ill persons had moderate to severe pain. (Weiss SC, Emanuel LL, Fairclough DL, Emanuel, EJ. Understanding the experience of pain in terminally ill patients. Lancet 2001; 357: 1311-1315)

## Older Americans and Pain

- Pain is common among nursing home residents. It is estimated that 45% to 80% of them have substantial pain that is undertreated. (Ferrell BA. Pain evaluation and management in the nursing home. An Intern Med 1995; 123:681-687. Bernabei R, Gambassi G, Lapane K et al. Management of pain in elderly patients with cancer. SAGE Study Group (Systematic Assessment of Geriatric Drug use via Epidemiology) JAMA 1998; 279: 1877-1882.
- Two in three older Americans say that pain prevents them from engaging in routine activities (cooking, housework, hobbies, gardening). (*The Study of Pain and Older Americans*, Louis Harris & Associates for The National Council on Aging, 1997)
- Despite the fact that most older people say that they believe their doctors give them enough information about pain, more than one in three said their doctors do not provide important information (such as negative interaction with other drugs). (*The Study of Pain and Older Americans*, Louis Harris & Associates for The National Council on Aging, 1997)

## Addiction and Dependence to Pain Medications

- Addiction is believed to rarely occur in patients who receive pain medications for a medical reason and have no history of drug abuse or addiction. (*Prescription Pain Medications: Frequently Asked Questions and Answers for Health Care Professionals and Law Enforcement Personnel*; A consensus document from the Drug Enforcement Administration and health care experts; [http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/faq/pain\\_meds\\_faqs.pdf](http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/faq/pain_meds_faqs.pdf))
- Physical dependence to pain medication is not addiction. Persons with pain regularly treated with opioid analgesics will develop physical dependence and they will experience withdrawal if they abruptly stop taking the drugs. Proper tapering of the dose can prevent withdrawal symptoms. (*Definitions Related to the Use of Opioids for the Treatment of Pain*. A consensus document from the American Academy of Pain Medicine, American Pain Society and the American Society of Addiction Medicine. [www.ampainsoc.org/advocacy/opioids2.htm](http://www.ampainsoc.org/advocacy/opioids2.htm))