

THE TRUTH ABOUT PAIN SPECIALISTS

By Jeffrey R. Lyman, MD, Orthopedic Specialty Institute

Pain is often what drives patients into an orthopedic surgeon or primary care physician's (PCP's) office. It can be a particular source of frustration for doctors and their patients when the root cause is not identifiable. Pain is not always linearly related to disease state and is often hard for patients to define and quantify. Patients experiencing ill-defined pain are often termed "troubled patients" and can require and benefit from multiple targeted interventions. These patients are most appropriately treated by pain specialists - a relatively newly established subspecialty of providers who serve as increasingly valuable allies to orthopedic surgeons and PCPs.

THE PAIN SPECIALIST'S ROLE

Understanding the pain specialist's role and value-add is particularly relevant at a time when the population is aging and the opioid epidemic continues to swell. Increased awareness of the opioid epidemic has made opioid pain medication a less favorable form of treatment.

Some orthopedic surgeons and PCPs have the misconception that pain specialists are like pharmacies, solely responsible for dispensing opioid pain medications, tapering patients up and down based on their pain levels.

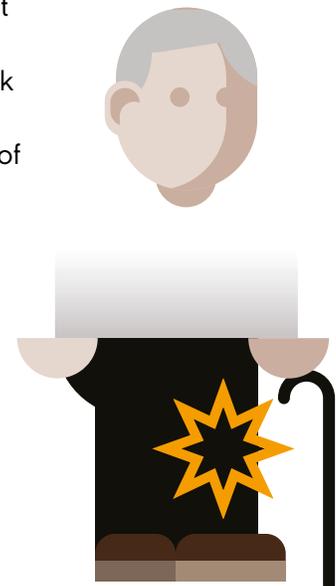
Pain specialists act as both trusted advisors and co-pilots in identifying the root cause of a patient's pain and managing their continuum of care. With an integrated, collaborative pain management team behind them, patients can experience better outcomes. In my orthopedic practice, I've found it extremely beneficial to both refer to and partner with pain specialists to treat patients experiencing chronic, complicated and often unexplained forms of pain, as well as manage pain in pre-and post-operative patients.

Pain physicians employ a number of treatment methods based on their specialized knowledge and expertise. These minimally invasive treatments such as cooled radiofrequency ablation, or COOLIEF* Cooled RF, are non-surgical, non-narcotic and effective pain management solutions for appropriately selected patients.

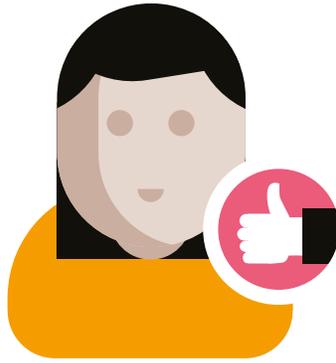
THE BENEFITS OF PARTNERSHIPS AND REFERRALS

Surgery is not always the solution. Working in collaboration with pain specialists has enabled me to optimize and customize the care I provide and ensure that my patients have access to the most appropriate surgical and non-surgical solutions to treat their pain. With expert counsel from pain specialists, I'm able to provide patients with honest, well-rounded recommendations for treatment of their chronic pain as a part of their overall treatment path.

Working with a group of trusted pain specialists has brought my practice and patients a myriad of benefits. Since evidence suggests early pain management is in the patient's best interest, I frequently work with a pain specialist during the early stages of patient care. Often, we work collaboratively to review a patient's X-ray or MRI and discuss next steps, particularly for those unexplained cases where surgery may not be the best initial solution.



Recruiting this type of assistance from pain specialists to help address a patient's chronic pain assures patients that their concerns are being listened to. This increases patient satisfaction and confidence and makes them more likely to recommend my practice. For associated providers, the fact that I know how to most effectively treat their patients' chronic pain demonstrates that I am a valuable resource. It also enables me to increase my clinical efficiency by treating problems I'm most equipped to manage directly.



working with my pain specialist colleagues that medication regimes and minimally invasive outpatient treatment options such as Cooled RF can effectively target and treat this type of pain without surgery for certain patients.

When necessary, I turn to pain specialist colleagues to treat my patient's perioperative pain. I've found that the simple act of sending my patients to pain specialists before and after surgery increases patient comfort throughout the experience and helps them get back on their feet again more quickly post-operatively.

Jeffrey R. Lyman, MD, has a consulting/speaking/financial relationship with Avanos Medical, Inc.

These collaborations enable me to better support my patients and provide the most informed, customized care to treat their chronic pain. As a result, patients have high-quality care experiences and speak positively of my practice to friends and loved ones. By establishing strong relationships with pain specialists, other orthopedic surgeons and primary care physicians can realize these benefits too.

Some patients experiencing severe pain in their hips, knees and backs will automatically inquire about surgery. In many cases, neuropathic pain originating from an irritated nerve is the source of that pain. With my knee pain patients, I've learned firsthand through

There are inherent risks in all medical devices. For more detail on indications, cautions, warnings and contraindications, [click here](#).