

Australian Integrative Medicine Association Article – April 2007

Integrative Medicine Conference Focusing Pain Management
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Conference wrap up: Integrative Approaches to Pain Management

The Byron Integrative Medicine Conference witnessed a gathering of practitioners of all ilk, open their minds to understand many different perspectives on treating pain. The multidisciplinary nature of the event was well rounded, with protocols from various modalities providing inspiration, hope and education for many practitioners.

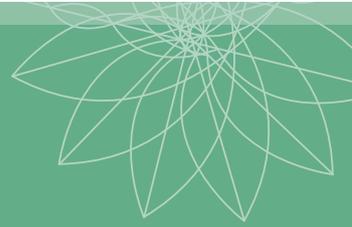
Dr Russell Vickers, an oromaxillafacial surgeon, researcher, qualified herbalist and homoeopath, educator and pain specialist was the introductory speaker. The multifaceted nature of pain, its development from acute nociceptive to chronic neuropathic and the metabolic symphony that accompanies the pain response were explained. Dr Vickers then gave suggestions on how to record pain and the variables affecting pain.

He spoke of how chronic pain needs both orthodox medicine and complementary assistance, particularly in combating the role of sympathetic stress response in aggravating pain. He also gave an overview of successful herbal approaches, a brief explanation of homoeopathic dilutions and a number of case studies to illustrate its efficacy.

Professor Marc Cohen, president of AIMA and Australian pioneer in complementary medicine provided a fascinating keynote, focusing on the body as a communication network and how blockages in communication are essentially the issue with pain. He employed his spiralling model of health from disease to optimal health and how in this open system, the steady state of homoeostasis is achieved.

Using principles of thermodynamics laws, Professor Cohen described how entropy and disorder affects a closed system. He gave examples of physical obstruction, closed mindedness and energetic blockages and how this separates one from the universe at large creating isolation and disconnection. The effect of entropy in this closed state can create pain and disease.

He described isolation as frightening and contrary to the basic need for connection as a basis for whole health. Entropy is related to uncertainty, and in pain management, uncertainty in itself can increase the experience of pain. Professor Cohen provided the gem of prescription, that to reduce uncertainty – through clear communication, taking the time to explain treatments, nourishing the therapeutic relationship, and providing effective and relieving medications and therapies - affected measurable decreases in pain.



Cohen suggested various types of pain treatments, favouring the diversion tactic of focusing the mind on activities that take up all concentration, thereby eliminating the uncertainty and simultaneously opening the person and reconnecting the system to a sense of wholeness and connection.

A speed networking session for delegates followed to help open referral networks amongst the eager crowd. Practitioners of 25 different professions mingled, kinesiologists with specialists and homoeopaths with medical scientists.

The panel discussion chaired by Professor Stephen Myers, allowed each panel member to provide a treatment protocol for one of Dr Vickers cases, "high achieving Gordon with chronic pain".

Dr Frank Wagner, specialist physician from the Lismore Pain Clinic provided a concise and clear picture of the pathophysiology of the pain and the drug therapy that would be most likely employed.

Dr Viv Griffiths, who runs the masters in TCM at Southern Cross University, gave an overview of the TCM approach, discussing opening the channels as well as treating deeper organ dysfunction with Ye, the intention, to decrease uncertainty and fear and increase calm.

Dr Chin Chan, GP Acupuncturist and President of the Australian Medical Acupuncturist College questioned the need for a diagnosis, saying that pain itself is an entity. Dr Chan then explained the various options of treatment from a TCM perspective.

Jenny Prince, a Clinical nurse consultant from the Lismore Pain Clinic, discussed comparing stillness; adaptive behaviour and crisis reactions and how her approach would be bringing Gordon back to the sill point through cognitive behaviour therapy program.

Kris Keevers, psychologist specialising in pain management discussed the need for relaxation therapy, recognising the "perfectionist tendencies" and provided an eleven-point plan to work through Gordon's dilemma.

Paul Orrock, Osteopath spoke from a manual therapists perspective treating it as myofascial spreading pain from a TMJ problem and providing physical pain reduction, relaxation and exercise prescriptions to foster at least a 50% reduction in pain.

Marc Cohen finished up with asking, "where is the uncertainty?" and decided to focus on what is certain in Gordon's life and to prescribed him to do the positive things he loves to do.

Dr Anthony Solomon and Naturopath Sally Mathrick from the North Coast Medical Centre hosted the evening. The next Integrative Medicine event will be July 13 and 14th 2007 focusing on Depression and Happiness. www.byroninhealth.com