



Prospectus to Promote Public and Patient Pain Education

Pain is a universal experience but is unique to each individual. Across the life span, pain—whether acute or chronic—is one of the most frequent reasons people see their doctors, among the most common reasons for taking medications, and a major cause of disability and work absences. Severe pain affects physical and mental functioning, quality of life, and productivity.

Pain affects more people than heart disease, diabetes, and cancer combined. It imposes a significant financial burden on affected individuals, as well as their families, employers, friends, communities, and nations as a whole.

Many members of the public—people with pain themselves—and many health professionals are inadequately prepared to take preventive action, recognize warning signs, initiate timely and appropriate treatment, or seek consultation from well-trained specialists. Consequently, more people than necessary experience pain, which often progresses from acute to chronic.

Therefore, IASP has declared 2018 the Global Year for Excellence in Pain Education

What can governments and national organizations do?

Governmental organizations and national agencies, in partnership with health professions associations, pain advocacy and awareness organizations, and other relevant stakeholders, are encouraged to develop and promote pain education programs for patients, the public, and health-care providers.

Each of these audiences has distinct needs for greater knowledge, and each presents its own education challenges. These education programs need to be high quality and evidence-based, and they should incorporate examples of successful approaches.

Why educate the public about pain?

Public education can help reduce the burden of pain in society. Here are five reasons why public education about pain could be highly beneficial:

1. People who have received such education can take steps to avoid pain, such as practicing proper stretching and lifting techniques, and they can engage in timely and useful self-management when pain strikes.
2. People educated about pain can give appropriate advice and assistance to family members, friends, and colleagues with pain.
3. In interactions with health-care providers, educated people can advocate for and accept appropriate treatment of acute and chronic pain they or family members experience.
4. An educated public can act at the community level to minimize hazards that contribute to pain-producing injuries; for example, in youth contact-sports programs and in communities that may be prone to unshoveled walkways or have sidewalks in disrepair.
5. Educated citizens can advocate for improved public policies on pain prevention and control, such as reasonable sports helmet requirements, lawful access to medically necessary opioid medications, and health insurer reimbursement of interdisciplinary pain care.

These educational tools may be useful in reaching the public:

- Website content, email lists, and social media
- Fact sheets distributed to target audiences, such as opinion leaders or community meeting attendees
- Informational reports and studies
- Pamphlets distributed at schools, workplaces, churches, public meetings, and other venues
- Signs at health-care facilities and in health professionals' offices
- Media outreach
- Coalition building among stakeholders
- Surveys of public or professional attitudes used to garner media attention
- Wellness classes at health facilities, gyms, senior centers, and adult education programs
- Instructional videos
- Attempts to influence purveyors of popular culture, such as television and movie scriptwriters

Why educate patients about pain?

People with acute or chronic pain often are unaware of their treatment options or may hold inaccurate or value-laden beliefs about pain that obstruct the path to treatment and relief. It certainly is possible to mine the rich experiences of educating patients with various diseases in order to improve strategies and expand the supply of materials for patient education about pain.

Patient education programs and materials, like treatment choices, need to be age appropriate and geared to the person's and family's level of comprehension and general health literacy. They must be culturally and linguistically sensitive and offer people timely opportunities to ask questions and receive authoritative and useful answers.

Strategies to support education of patients

- Leaflets
- Hospital and clinic television programming
- YouTube videos
- Chronic pain self-management programs
- Mobile device applications
- Interactive discussion forums

Select Patient Education Resources

- [American Academy of Pain Medicine Patient Education and Resources](#)
- [Canadian Pain Coalition](#)
- [City of Hope Pain & Palliative Care Resource Center: Patient and Family Education](#)
- [International Pain Foundation \(iPain\)](#)
- [University of Pittsburg Schools of Health Sciences \(UPMC\) Patient Education Materials: Pain Control](#)

