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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Primary Care Physicians Get Boost in Pain Care Education Through Tele-Mentoring by Experts

March 19, 2015, NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – Weekly tele-mentoring sessions with experts in pain management showed promise for reducing the common care disparities seen in areas where such resources are scarce. The program connected leaders in pain medicine from the University of California, Davis, with primary care providers based in rural communities, according to a scientific poster describing the program, on view today at the 31st Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Pain Medicine.

During peer-to-peer video conferences, participants discussed a broad range of pain care topics and management of difficult cases. The duration of the program was two years of ongoing tele-mentoring.

“The program goes beyond telemedicine,” said Scott Fishman, M.D., chief of the Division of Pain Medicine, UC Davis, in Sacramento, Calif. “Each session, we directly engage in case management around difficult, complex presentations of pain.”

Early survey results are encouraging: 96.6 percent of learners reported increased competence, and 98.2 percent said the experience helped them better care for their patients with pain. After six months, participants demonstrated improvement in perceived competency, attitudes and knowledge in pain management.

Fishman pointed to well-documented evidence that pain management is under represented in the curriculum of medical students as well as nurses and other health professionals, according to the 2011 report on pain in America published by the Institute of Medicine (“Relieving Pain in America: A Blueprint for Transforming Prevention, Care, Education, and Research.” National Academies Press [US]; 2011).

“Patients are stressed to find primary care doctors for general medical conditions let alone for specialty care and are extremely under served in terms of pain management,” Fishman said. “Much of this pain management falls on primary care doctors, who were under educated to start with, and who feel stressed with the complexity of the issues that patients with chronic pain present with.”

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The education model emulated Project Echo, started at the University of New Mexico, to train rural primary care doctors in how to diagnose and treat hepatitis C. In creating the program, UC Davis pain leaders convened to develop consensus-based core competencies for pain education for all healthcare professions, to include doctors, nurses, physical therapists, psychologists, pharmacists and more. Topics in the curriculum ranged from pain classification and diagnosis to treatment options that included psychological, medical, surgical and integrative and alternative interventions.

Learners were chosen by Medicaid-based insurance programs that identified care practices in rural California. The UC Davis Institutional Review Board approved the project.

Fishman said the results should boost recognition that tele-mentoring may be effective for amplifying and improving specialty care skills within primary care centers that lie outside the catchment areas of specialists. The hope is that health insurance carriers will recognize the added value of pain education and further realize that primary care providers are willing to carve out time to participate.

Poster LB005 – Primary Care Centers of Excellence in Pain Management Through Tele-Mentoring
Funding: California Health Care Foundation

About AAPM
The American Academy of Pain Medicine is the premier medical association for pain physicians and their treatment teams with over 2,500 members. Now in its 32nd year of service, the Academy’s mission is to optimize the health of patients in pain and eliminate pain as a major public health problem by advancing the practice and specialty of pain medicine through education, training, advocacy and research. Information is available on the Academy’s website at www.painmed.org.

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