Next month will mark the Academy’s 29th Annual Meeting in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, providing an excellent opportunity for you to join your colleagues and convene to address pressing concerns of pain medicine physicians, as well as primary care physicians. Attendees will look to better assess and diagnose patients with acute and chronic pain disorders, develop patient treatment plans, improve treatment of patients with addictions and psychological disorders, and enhance the scientific rigor and quality of their practice.

Besides providing an ideal networking venue, the meeting cuts a clear educational path for clinicians and academicians to learn the latest trends and evidence-based research. Meeting sessions will delineate knowledge and present a balance of complex issues and straightforward clinical information to use in practice.

In today’s environment, it is imperative that we maintain a strong stance as pain experts to the medical community, fully understand a growing array of pain therapies and treatments, and be grounded in pain science. The goal of this meeting is to share information on the latest science and advancements in the treatment of pain so that we practice in an evidence-based fashion.

Striking the Right Balance

To help achieve that, our educational sessions take a biopsychosocial approach, rather than one that is purely biomedical to pain medicine. Large issues such as interventional pain and military and veterans’ pain care are presented in multisession tracks, while several symposia highlight physical examination and assessment. For example, the session “The Differentiation of Shoulder vs. Neck Pain,” provides clinicians with tools to assess patients’ pain condition of a specific body part. Likewise, the session “Clinical Pearls of Pain Medicine” provides five “rapid fire” introductions to important topics such as smoking and chronic pain, hypogonadism, platelet-rich plasma (PRP), new sacroiliac joint interventional procedures, and exercise used to treat spinal pain disorders.

The program also provides pain clinicians valuable information in a number of different areas from how to treat the complex patient with an opioid addiction problem to how to better assess patients. We will cover broad areas and more straightforward clinical scenarios. We have lectures on interdisciplinary treatment—combining psychological, medical, and even physical therapy—as well as sessions on chronic abdominal pain, and on patients with opioid addiction needing functional restoration. Several programs focus on the need for proper screening of patients.

Conference Highlights

This year’s annual meeting offers an excellent lineup of expert faculty who will share the latest science facing pain practitioners today. Among some highlights:

- Regenerative medicine is a top research priority in pain treatment, and injections of PRP hold particular promise because they accelerate tissue repair and regeneration caused by injury or surgery. In “PRP: Regenerative Therapy,” clinical applications of PRP in the areas of tendinopathy, osteoarthritis, and cartilage lesions, and surgery will be discussed.

- The popular preconference program “Essential Tools for Treating the Patient in Pain™” presents practical approaches to treating common pain disorders. Targeted to everyone from residents to physician members and other clinicians, the 2-day course offers lectures on assessing, diagnosing, and treating patients with acute, cancer, end-of-life, and chronic pain syndromes.

- Two intriguing plenary sessions are planned. The first stems from the many clinical trials of new pain treatments not showing significant benefits. Robert H. Dworkin, PhD, of the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, will address the sensitivity inherent in clinical trials and provide his insights on using research to improve pain treatments in clinical practice. Another plenary session focuses on functional neuroimaging of chronic pain and will be moderated by Sean Mackey, MD, PhD, who will also present along with M. Catherine Bushnell, PhD, and Vitaly Napadow, PhD. This session will review how central brain networks are involved in both acute and chronic pain states.

- The American Academy of Pain Medicine (AAPM) Research Committee is providing “Advancing Pain Research in Clinical Practice,” a Continuing Medical Education session to help meeting attendees improve their research opportunities. This educational session
explores the process of initiating clinical research and analyzing data.

- The current climate of accountable care organizations, declining reimbursement, and bundled payments continues to point to the importance of practicing evidence-based medicine to ensure payment for services. The session, “Value-Based Care for Pain Medicine,” addresses the value of electronic assessment tools to gather, track, and present value-based data.

- Another session will focus on managing acute pain in chronic opiate patients. It includes a medical literature-based review on the pharmacology of opiates and the current epidemiology of using opiates to treat chronic nonmalignant pain.

- Another session highlights two intensive interdisciplinary chronic pain rehabilitation programs for individuals with persistent, nonmalignant pain: the Cleveland Clinic’s Chronic Pain Rehabilitation Program and the Rosomoff Comprehensive Rehabilitation Center.

- A session on Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) explains the role of various treatments in the interdisciplinary model and interprets evidence-based data on novel treatments for treating CRPS. The session also explores how to best integrate various therapies included in a new treatment algorithm.

- Other sessions focus on the future of spinal cord stimulation and intrathecal drug therapy and on prospective evidence-based studies for implantable therapies.

The Meeting also includes a four-part Military and Veterans’ Pain Care track highlighting targeted quality pain care to service members and veterans. This year, the Department of Defense (DOD) and Veterans’ Health Administration will focus on acute pain medicine, discuss the differences between military and civilian functional recovery programs, describe the DOD’s success in treating chronic pain, and explore how the Veterans Affairs’ Special Care Access Network—Extension for Community Healthcare Outcome program, working with the DOD’s ECHO program, enables rural primary care clinicians to care for veterans with chronic pain conditions.

AAPM also has partnered with the International Spinal Intervention Society to present an overview of interventional pain. Sessions will explore the indications for spinal injections and provide examples of good evidence and poorly performed studies, review techniques used to perform basic lumbar and cervical procedures that decrease risk and improve outcomes, and discuss cervical medical branch blocks and cervical radiofrequency—two of the most rigorously studied procedures in interventional pain medicine.

Now, more than ever, people with pain need clinical expertise, leadership, dedicated pain physicians, members of their clinical teams, and collaborators in other specialties and disciplines, such as primary care to offer hope for improved quality of life. I encourage you to register today at www.painmed.org and look forward to seeing you in Fort Lauderdale.

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