

Targeted Pain Treatment (TPT) Frequently Asked Questions Patient Handout

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Overview

1. **What is Targeted Pain Treatment (TPT)?**
 - a. Targeted pain treatment (TPT) is the process of accurately diagnosing the cause(s) of a patient's pain and targeting the treatment to the cause(s).
2. **What about TPT makes it so different from traditional pain management with pain scores?**
 - a. Targeted Pain Treatment focuses first on accurately identifying all of the causes of the pain that the patient is experiencing, and then targets treatment to the identified causes. This is different from some approaches to pain management that have traditionally focused on lowering the pain score, without always treating the true cause of the pain.

ACCURATE DIAGNOSIS

3. **Why is an “accurate diagnosis” in TPT so important and what does it mean?**
 - a. In TPT, “accurate diagnosis” means identifying the specific cause(s) of the pain that the patient is experiencing.
 - b. The cause(s) of pain may be:
 - i. Physiologic (related to how the body processes pain signals).
 - ii. Anatomic (related to structures in the body such as muscles, bones, joints and nerves).
 - iii. Functional (related to injury, posture, movement or other position related factors).
 - iv. Psychosocial (related to the way the mind deals with emotions, stresses and other environmental factors which can affect pain perception or experience).
4. **Can I have more than one cause of pain in the same location (e.g. low back) at the same exact time?**
 - a. Yes, it is possible to have different causes of pain affecting the same area of your body. For example, if you have low back pain and leg pain, it could be due to a combination of muscle spasms (physiologic), a pinched nerve in your back (anatomic), and possibly made worse by the way you walk or stand (functional). In order to get the best, lasting pain relief, we have to treat ALL of the identified causes of your back and leg pain.
5. **How can you determine the cause of my pain?**
 - a. In order to make an accurate diagnosis of the patient's pain the provider must obtain a detailed history, physical examination and complete the proper tests and studies (MRI, x-ray, CT, etc).
6. **What do I need to tell you about my pain to help you figure it out?**
 - a. You will want to tell your provider as many details as possible about your pain, how it started, what it feels like, and what you've done for it so far, so that he or she can figure out what is causing your pain.

TARGETED TREATMENT

7. Why is it important to treat all of the causes of my pain?

- a. In order for the patient to feel the most relief, *all* the causes of pain should be correctly diagnosed and treated. For example, if a patient is suffering from muscle spasm and a herniated disc in their back, both must be treated otherwise the patient could feel minimal relief due to the other untreated cause.

8. What are medications supposed to target? How are they chosen?

- a. Medications target the physiologic source of pain. In order to choose the correct medication, we have to understand the different working parts or pain states. For example, pain may be a result of inflammation, muscle spasms, nerve damage etc. By identifying the pain state, we can choose a medication that correctly targets that type of pain.

9. What are “interventions” and what kind of pain do they target?

- a. Intervention are injections or procedures that target the anatomic (physical) structure(s) that are causing the pain. Once these structures are identified, your provider may either do an injection targeting the physical cause of your pain, or may refer you to a specialist for a more complex injection.

10. If I need more than one injection, how can you choose which injection to do first?

- a. Your provider may choose or recommend one of two strategies. If you have one anatomic cause of pain that is much, much worse than the others, he or she may recommend targeting that structure first. If you have more than one anatomic structures at the same intensity of pain, your provider may choose to work from the “inside-out” (starting with the deepest physical structure and working their way out to the surface). When using injections, it is important to be specific (get as close as possible to the cause), and safe (consider all factors such as your medications, diseases or anatomy, and use image guidance as recommended).

11. What kind of pain can be targeted by physical therapy?

- a. Physical therapy targets the functional causes of pain that results from the body's physical limitations, flexibility, and changes in posture. It also helps to strengthen muscles to prevent re-injuries.

12. What is psychosocial treatment and how does it help my pain?

- a. Sometimes a person's emotions or conditions such as anxiety or depression can affect how a person copes with or experiences their pain. Psychosocial therapy may help with the person's ability to cope with their emotions and better manage their pain experience. Some examples of psychosocial therapy include counseling with a psychologist, cognitive behavioral therapy and meditation.