

Manage Your Chronic Pain

By Kathy Duncan

I could hardly believe when the spine specialist said that there was nothing that they could do for me. I had a thoracic spine injury that was causing constant and severe pain. Being in the thoracic area, the only way to perform surgery that may or may not help was to open my chest like they do in open heart surgery to work on my spine from the anterior angle. I had already taken spinal injections, drugs, physical therapy, and massage, but had never considered that the doctor would say that I was at the end of the line. What would that mean?

As a Massage Therapist myself, I had a lot of contact with other Alternative Practitioners and Western Medical professionals. As I began to ask questions, I realized that the one thing that most health professionals have in common is that they agree that a person with chronic pain should move forward with every intention of finding a solution. This is the point where the suffering patient needs to open all doors that could lead to healing.

There is no place in a suffering person's life for partisanship. If your doctor thinks that Alternative Practices like herbs or acupuncture are not valid therapies, it is possibly time to start doctor shopping, and vice-versa. Your wellness and ability to manage your pain should be your team's priority. If it isn't, it is time to form a new team that is willing to combine therapies.

There are many MD's that are acupuncture licensed these days, and there are also many Naturopathic Physicians that are willing to work with your MD and your current medications. When you are suffering with an illness or chronic complaint, there are a variety of treatment combinations that can bring relief.

It is your responsibility to educate yourself, rely on your doctor, your pharmacist, and your therapists. Doctors don't want to hear that you read about a supplement on the internet, and your pharmacist doesn't want you taking a myriad of supplements that might contradict your blood pressure medicine. By educating yourself, and discussing your options with an open minded, credible, professional advisor, you might be able to avoid some annoying side effects while remaining strong during therapy and recovery.

There are some really good and valid reasons to take a supplement in combination with a prescription drug that are safe and effective. For example, if you are taking an antibiotic that may kill friendly bacteria in your gut, you should be taking friendly bacteria like acidophilus with other strains. A Naturopathic Physician can help you to understand which product is right under the circumstances. Buying any product from the supplement shelf, just because you saw it on TV, and it's available over-the-counter, shouldn't be your self-prescribed solution, however, you should feel comfortable asking your doctor about it.

Another application would be a person with chronic pain that has a hard time with anti-inflammatory medications. There are some incredible herbal blends made with colostrum that will protect your stomach from the conditions that can arise from those types of medication.

The bottom line here is that your body needs maintenance and management just like your vehicle and your home. Cost can be a factor, as well as who you choose as your mechanic. Weighing out your preventative maintenance options, and how you live your life each day will determine how long that your motor runs.

If you find yourself with chronic pain, a pesky chronic health problem, or even a severe illness, you owe it to yourself to interview your potential caregivers, Western or Alternative, to find the most holistic program possible. These two therapies complement each other so well, that your practitioners should too.

The truth is, if your body has an injury causing long-term pain, you have the choice of zoning out on pain medication which has its own long term side effects, or learning how to perform exercises and treatments (like ice or heat) on a daily basis in order to manage your pain. In many cases, like osteoarthritis, the condition can be permanent and will require many efforts including drugs, herbs, ice, exercise, rest, stretching, and manual therapy. Some problems cannot be healed with a pill. They will take management.

In order to avoid depression and hopelessness, a team management program for your pain could be the answer. If you don't know exactly where to start, I would begin with your doctor. If they are not completely open to options beyond medication, I would consult with a Naturopathic Physician. Remember, each of them are going to advocate their own practice, but you are the owner of your body. Don't give up. Try new things.