ABOUT PAIN MANAGEMENT

- According to NIH, 65.6 percent of Veterans reported having pain over a three-month period, with 9.1 having severe pain. Severe pain was 40 percent greater in Veterans than non-Veterans, especially among those who served in recent conflicts.

- Chronic pain can cause disability, loss of work productivity, and increased health care costs.

- Unrelieved and persistent chronic pain contributes to depression, anxiety, poor sleep patterns, decreased quality of life, and substance use disorders.

- Medication is the most common treatment for both acute and chronic pain. For patients interested in treatments other than or in addition to medication, complementary and integrative medicine—such as acupuncture and yoga—is a popular option.

VA RESEARCH ON PAIN MANAGEMENT: OVERVIEW

- VA researchers are working to develop new approaches to alleviate Veterans’ pain, which may result from spinal cord injury, burns, amputations, traumatic brain injury, cancer, or musculoskeletal conditions. Some types of chronic pain, such as nerve pain experienced by many people with spinal cord injury, are very difficult to treat.

- The Center for Neuroscience and Regeneration Research, a collaboration between VA and its partners, conducts biomedical research that contributes to the scientific understanding of pain, especially nerve pain. The center is dedicated to molecular and cell-based discoveries on nervous system function.

- VA’s Pain, Research, Informatics, Medical Comorbidities, and Education (PRIME) Center, part of the VA Connecticut Healthcare System, conducts research to improve pain care and sponsors education activities for Veterans and clinical staff.

- The Chronic Pain Rehabilitation Program at the James A. Haley Veterans Hospital in Tampa, Florida, is a nationally known center for chronic pain research, treatment, and education. The CPRP offers inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation programs to help Veterans manage their chronic pain conditions.

- The Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion (CHERP) is a VA HSR&D Center of Innovation whose mission is to advance the quality and equity of health care for vulnerable Veteran Populations. CHERP is examining the associations of socio-economic status and geographic residence with pain management in Veterans.

- The Pain Management and Patient Aligned Care CREATE has three goals: to enhance Veterans’ access to pain care, to use health information technology to promote better pain care for Veterans, and to build sustainable improvements in pain care.

- VA’s Stepped Care Model for Pain Management gives clinicians the ability to assess and treat pain within a primary care setting, while enabling them to use other treatment options including specialized care and multidisciplinary approaches. The model is designed to ensure VA clinicians are fully trained in pain management techniques, that pain assessment is performed consistently throughout VA, and that Veterans receive prompt and appropriate treatment.

SELECTED MILESTONES AND MAJOR EVENTS

1988 - Established a chronic pain rehabilitation program in Tampa to help Veterans with chronic pain cope with their conditions

1988 - Distributed the first national pain management strategy, which established pain management as a national VA priority
Severe pain was 40 percent greater in Veterans than non-Veterans, especially among those who served in recent conflicts.

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