

PAIN MANAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE

FACTSHEET ACCESS TO CARE



50 million adults in the United States have chronic daily pain, with **19.6 million** adults experiencing high-impact chronic pain that interferes with daily life or work activities.



Many of these patients suffering from pain **face significant barriers accessing care**. For example, different facets of stigma — at the patient, provider, and social levels — collectively serve as a significant barrier to effective treatment of chronic pain.



Medical complications from inadequately treated acute pain may **include prolonged recovery time, unanticipated hospital readmissions, and transition to chronic and persistent pain**. Unremitting and inadequately treated pain is also associated with **increased anxiety, depression, disability, unemployment, and lost income**.



The Pain Management Best Practices Inter-Agency Task Force encourages the use of a **multidisciplinary approach** for chronic pain across various disciplines, using one or more treatment approaches when clinically indicated to improve outcomes.



Addressing barriers to **access to care** is essential in optimizing the management of acute and chronic pain, **enabling patients and physicians to utilize clinically indicated treatment modalities**, including medication (opioid and non-opioid), restorative therapies (e.g., physical therapy, aqua and movement therapy), interventional approaches, behavioral approaches, and complementary and integrative health (e.g., yoga, tai chi, acupuncture).

SEVERAL FACTORS ACT AS BARRIERS TO CARE:

NOT ENOUGH RESEARCH ON INNOVATIVE AND EFFECTIVE PAIN MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

Continued research initiatives are needed to develop **new and effective diagnostic, preventive, and therapeutic approaches** for patients, and to **implement novel approaches effectively in health systems**.

SHORTAGES OF MEDICAL AND BEHAVIORAL PAIN MANAGEMENT SPECIALISTS

The combination of **severe shortages of pain medicine specialists**, under-resourced and insufficiently trained primary care physicians (PCP) treating pain along with **insufficient access to behavioral health providers, pharmacists, and other members of the pain management team** hinders delivery of care for many patients with acute and chronic pain. More recently, **fear of regulatory scrutiny** amongst providers has caused unintended consequences with forced tapering and/or patient abandonment.

DRUG SUPPLY SYSTEM INTERRUPTIONS

Shortages of pharmacological and biological products, including opioid and non-opioid analgesics, can have severe and immediate outcomes for patient care. **Appropriate treatment can be delayed or denied** because of unavailability and, in other cases, result in the use of less effective alternatives.

LACK OF OR POOR INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR PAIN MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Patients with pain often experience barriers to care related to **nonexistent or insufficient insurance coverage** for evidence-based treatment approaches. Providers can face **inadequate reimbursement** for time spent with patients to manage more complex cases and conduct a proper medical history, physical exam, and risk assessment. The **inconsistencies in insurance policies**, the variability in guidance regarding coverage determinations, and the variability in utilization management tools that coverage providers use can cause:

- **delays in service delivery,**
- **provision of inadequate treatment, and**
- **added financial and psychosocial burden for patients with pain.**



LEARN MORE

- Read about access to care barriers faced by millions of Americans suffering from acute and chronic pain conditions in the Final Report at <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pmtf-final-report-2019-05-23.pdf>.
- Visit the Task Force website to find educational materials and other resources that can help overcome access to care barriers <https://www.hhs.gov/ash/advisory-committees/pain/index.html>.
- Support the initiatives and recommendations identified by the Task Force that seek to address access to care barriers in the Final Report at <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pmtf-final-report-2019-05-23.pdf>.
- For more information check out the HHS Blog post at <https://www.hhs.gov/blog/2019/05/10/patient-centered-care-is-key-to-best-practices-in-pain-management.html>.

