

CAPE BRETON DISTRICT HEALTH AUTHORITY

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Initiatives Underway to Help People with Chronic Pain

The Cape Breton District Health Authority is using National Pain Awareness Week, November 3-9, to highlight some of its initiatives in the area of chronic pain.

Chronic pain is recognized as a chronic disease by a number of organizations including the International Association for the Study of Pain and the Canadian Pain Society. The District has two Chronic Pain Clinics, one at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital and the other at the Northside General Hospital. Between the two clinics, there are over 8,500 patient visits each year.

“One in five Canadians is affected by chronic pain,” says Lynette Sawchuk, Program Manager, Palliative Care and Chronic Pain Services. “The healthcare costs associated with chronic pain are believed to exceed the costs of heart disease, cancer and AIDS combined. Through our service, we aim to improve the quality of life for people living with chronic pain, both under our care and in our community, through prevention, education, research and support.”

The District’s Chronic Pain Service has a multi-disciplinary staff that includes anesthesiologists, a psychologist, nurses, a physiotherapist, kinesiologist and is supported by administrative staff. This year, two primary health care medicine physicians joined the team. They spend two mornings a week working the Pain Clinic at the Regional Hospital in addition to working in their primary health care practices.

“Having these physicians available to us is a benefit to our patients and a great resource for our service,” says Sawchuk. “According to ACTION Atlantic, pain is the most common reason why Canadians see a doctor. An estimated 80% of physician office visits involve a pain related component.”

There are also community resources available for people with chronic pain. This year, Chronic Pain Services partnered with Primary Care to deliver a program that people in the community can use to help them better manage their chronic pain. The Chronic Pain Self-Management program is a six-week program designed to increase people’s confidence in managing their own health. People living with chronic pain and their families or friends are welcome to attend. Through the program, participants learn to deal with frustration, fatigue and poor sleep brought on by their conditions as well as the importance of exercise, healthy eating and rest. **The next program starts on Monday, Nov. 18 at the Heart Lung Wellness Centre in Membertou.** The Chronic Pain Self-Management Program is free but seating is limited so people must register in advance. **To register, call Kelly MacIsaac at 902-842-0201.**

Another resource people with chronic pain can access is the local Chronic Pain Support Group. This group is a community based group that is supported in partnership by ACTION Atlantic and the Chronic Pain Service. Though it’s based in North Sydney, it has members from across the Island. New members are always welcome in the group. **To learn more about the Chronic Pain Support Group, call Carla Cordy at 902-736-8227.**

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A Chronic Pain Fact Sheet from ACTION Atlantic is attached.

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Facts About Chronic Pain

Courtesy ACTION Atlantic

- In the Atlantic Provinces, 20-25% of adults aged 18 and older suffer from chronic pain
- At any one time 7 million Canadians are taking pain medication, yet many do not find relief.
- Generally the last two to three days of a hospital stay are due to pain.
- A recent Canadian Pain Society survey found that 33% of Canadians lost a job because of their pain and 47% had reduced job responsibilities.
- After a chronic pain patient is off work for two years, there is a less than 2% chance they will ever be able to return to work
- Workplace costs of chronic pain in Canada amounts to approximately \$37 billion per year, including lost jobs and sick days.