Things you might not know about our non-physician professional colleagues

PHYSICAL THERAPY

Education, training, certification
- Bachelor’s degree
- Post-baccalaureate degree
- Transitioning so that all graduates must complete doctorate degree (DPT)
- State licensures

Subspecialties
- Sports PT
- Women’s health/pelvic PT
- Neurology
- Pediatric
- Geriatric

Types of pain best for a PT approach
- Back pain
- Joint and muscle pains
- Some chronic headaches
- Sports injuries
- Some pelvic, perineal, and anal pain

Active modalities
- Movement based, such as stretching and range of motion exercises
- Specific strength exercises
- Pain-related exercises
- Low-impact aerobic conditioning

Passive modalities
- Manual therapies
- Heat/ice packs
- Electrical stimulation, including TENS
- Ultrasound
- Dry needling

Top five things our physical therapist colleagues would like you to know
- In California, patients can self-refer directly to PT’s (“direct access”)
- Some insurers encourage self-referral to PT for initial evaluation and treatment by waiving deductibles and copays for first few visits. (Decreased overall costs shown)
- PT’s are expert at initial evaluation, diagnosis and treatment planning
- Many PT’s use a “bio-social” approach, integrating the psychological and social factors that influence pain and its relief
- Some new primary care group models include PT’s as members of the primary care team

CHIROPRACTIC

Education, training, certification
- Bachelor’s degree
- Four-year chiropractic doctoral training (DC)
- Two-part national board examinations
- Continuing education same as MD/DO – 24 hours per year
- Multiple areas of subspecialty training, including radiology, neurology, sports/team doctor, nutrition, and exercise rehab

Subspecialties
- Sports / team doctor
- Radiology
- Neurology
- Nutrition
- Exercise rehab
- Occupational Health

Types of pain best for chiropractic approach
- Neck and back/disc pain
- Headache/migraine
- Sciatica
- Joint and extremity pain
- Torticollis

Top five things our chiropractic colleagues would like you to know:
- Chiropractic is concerned with the relationship between structure and function
- The nervous system is vulnerable to interference from tissue changes that cause fixations of surrounding bony structures
- Three causes of fixation are mechanical, chemical, and emotional
- Acute fixations, without chronic associated degenerative changes, respond more quickly
- Chiropractors may make recommendations regarding diet, exercise, and stress release to restore normal nervous system function and general health

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MENTAL HEALTH – PSYCHOLOGISTS, LCSW, AND LMFT PAIN SPECIALISTS

Education, training, certification
» Varies by degree — PhD, LCSW, LMFT
» PhD
» LCSW
» LMFT-Master’s in clinical psych, counseling psych, transpersonal psych
» Each of these degreed counselors require at least 3,000 hours of supervised clinical experience prior to taking licensing exam
» License is renewed every 2 years with required CE Hours
» State licenses and continuing education

Pain-related areas of strength and expertise
» These professionals deal with the social component of chronic pain, pacing activities, challenging negative, and limited thinking, cultivate a healthier relationship with the body
» Individual and group therapy

Top five things our therapist colleagues would like you to know:
» Therapists emphasize the role the participant plays in their own healing, as part of the team:
  » Addressing “learned helplessness” allows participant to develop an empowering stance
  » Guided Visualization participants learn to listen to their body and begin to feel empowered rather than victimized by their body betrayal
  » Using the mind-body connection, therapists help patients develop techniques to reduce stress, develop resiliency — thereby increasing hope
  » Working with the Power of the Mind, therapists reframe negative thoughts, challenge catastrophic thinking, and address cognitive distortions
» Group interventions help to mitigate social isolation and depression and help participant gain perspective regarding their pain. Participants say:
  » “It’s a relief to come here and share with others who ‘get it’. It saves lives — Without this, I could have done myself in.”
  » “Pain is a teacher — forces one to look within… look at mortality.”
  » “Group is like a cool drink of water.”
  » “Power is fellowship. Camaraderie, friendships are built. Despair has been lost since attending.”
  » “Group has helped more than anything. Brings positive energy. Puts pain in perspective.”
» Many people who suffer from chronic pain have traumatic pasts. Using EMDR and other techniques to provide a corrective emotional experience can be very effective in their healing
» Developing a daily schedule with clients provides a disciplined approach to managing pain through pacing, exercising and stretching, relaxation, coping techniques, and setting realistic goals
» Therapists engage in education about diet, nutrition, and sleep hygiene

ACUPUNCTURE

Education, training, certification
» Bachelor’s degree (some graduate schools allow associates degree), RN or MD
» Master’s degree or doctorate, from a school of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) or Traditional Oriental Medicine. Top-ten U.S. schools include two in our area — Five Branches University in Santa Cruz and American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine in San Francisco
» California state licensure

Types of pain amenable to acupuncture
» Consider for all types of pain, acute and chronic — especially low back, neck, shoulder, knee pain, headache, dysmenorrhea, and fibromyalgia.
» Acute injury healing, such as the pain and swelling of sprains — avoids progression to chronic state
» Adjunct to physical therapy — allows improved patient participation

Top five things our acupuncture colleagues would like you to know:
» Acupuncture has been utilized for approximately 2,000 years. The exact mechanism of action, and in some cases the efficacy for specific conditions, remains somewhat controversial
» The traditional language of TCM can be confusing for Western medical professionals — resist the temptation to try to translate it literally
» Many patients find acupuncture helpful for things other than pain, such as: vertigo, asthma, Bell’s Palsy, anxiety, insomnia, and URI symptoms
» Effectiveness for a given patient can usually be determined within 3–6 weekly visits
» Acupuncture treatment is covered by many, if not most, insurances (including Aspire Medicare Advantage). It is considered a cost-effective alternative