

# Pain training for primary care providers

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Patients who experience chronic pain may experience improvement in symptoms if their primary care providers are specifically trained in multiple aspects of pain, including emotional consequences.

A collaborative team headed by Thomas C. Chelimsky, M.D., professor and chairman of the department of neurology at the Medical College of Wisconsin, conducted a [pilot study](#) assessing the Primary Practice Physician Program for Chronic Pain (4PCP) and its impact on both patients and providers.

The findings are published in the *Clinical Journal of Pain*, <http://journals.lww.com/clinicalpain/toc/publishahead>.

Chronic pain constitutes a heavy burden on healthcare systems, with more than 17 million disabled Americans reporting pain as the primary disability. Primary care providers report pain as the chief symptom of one third of their patients, yet many have little or no training in [chronic pain management](#).

The 4PCP program is designed to train physicians to lead an interdisciplinary team in managing patients with chronic pain; the team includes a pain-informed psychologist, occupational therapist, and a physical therapist, along with the physician.

In the study, physicians were randomized either to receive the training program immediately, or after a one-year control period. Both patients and physicians were evaluated after the intervention to measure its

effectiveness.

Patients with chronic pain experienced significant benefits, including reduced pain, fatigue, and depression. Physicians reported more comfort in assessing and treating those patients, and shorter visit times.

"We hope to avert chronic pain syndrome, and instead see improved return-to-work rates, fewer [emergency room visits](#), and significantly improved emotional well-being in these patients," said Dr. Chelimsky. "From a physician perspective, we observed greater [job satisfaction](#) and more efficiency. Economically, the impact of 4PCP training could be significant as well in health care dollars saved."

Provided by Medical College of Wisconsin

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