



Fort Carson-MEDDAC News

Free MEDDAC school takes aim at pain

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According to the Institute of Medicine, one in four Americans live with chronic pain. The medical costs and lost productivity due to chronic pain costs the United States up to \$635 billion every year. A class at Evans Army Community Hospital is taking aim at that population, hoping to equip people with the skills they need to cope with their conditions.

The Department of Primary Care began its "Pain School" almost one year ago. The idea was to educate people about chronic pain and help them create a multidisciplinary plan to improve their lives.

Julie Gandara-Miller, Clinical Pharmacist for the EACH Pain Clinic, said, "Patient education has a positive influence on outcomes. It decreases fear and anxiety and increases prevention. Communication is important for both the patient and providers."

The school consists of two courses and outlines the fundamentals of chronic pain, including what alternative therapies may help as well as information about pharmaceuticals. Discussions include information about pain journals, how chronic pain can affect relationships and mood, the role of exercise, how to communicate with medical professionals about pain, and the importance of using several different approaches in creating a management plan.

"It's the beginning of what I call the pain journey," explained Lt. Col. Joel Tanaka, chief of the Department of Primary Care. "We want to create a plan with the patient, not for you or to you. This allows the person suffering from chronic pain to take an active role and gain control."

Tanaka said that most people seem to be coming to the free classes as a "last ditch effort" when they don't know what else to do about their pain. He'd like to see people come in earlier, citing positive comments from participants.

"They tell me they left feeling empowered. You may live with pain but we can work on helping you understand the many tools available in order to help you optimize and improving your function," he said.

Gandara-Miller said the team approach is essential to the process.



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"This fits in with our Patient Centered Medical Home model," she noted. "We're working on a partnership with beneficiaries. We've learned much more about pain management and education is important to both patients and providers."

MEDDAC's medical providers also attend the classes and they've received additional education about the tools they can utilize to help patients to cope with pain.

Tanaka said, "Our approach now is multidisciplinary. We are committed to anything and everything across the spectrum of care to address the issue."

The free Pain School classes are held every Tuesday in Room 1004 of the PFC Eric P. Woods Soldier Family Care Center. Advance registration is not necessary and all patients and Family members are welcome to attend. Classes begin at 4 p.m. For more information, please talk to your Primary Care Manager core team.