Setting up a Pain Clinic
- An Anesthesiologist's Perspective
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Pain management is one of the avenues for the anesthesiologists, who are all looking for outside operative theater services. Already expertise in acute pain relief, chronic pain practice is very easy for the anesthesiologist. Pain medicine has been considered as a sub-specialty of anesthesia. But for whoever willing to start pain practice three questions will come in their mind, 1. How to start a pain clinic? 2. Am I qualified to run the unit? 3. Will it be a success? Probably these questions are acting like a hindrance to initiate the Pain Clinic process. I will try to answer these questions in this chapter.

Aim of this lecture is to brief about what is pain management?, How to establish a unit?, how to organize the department? What common pain syndromes are seen? How to get the training and making yourself qualified? and what are the advantages of pain practice?

What is Pain management unit/ Pain Clinic?
Pain management unit/Pain Clinic is one medical unit which can provide adequate pain relief for the patients who are suffering from chronic pain. It provides comprehensive as well as multi-specialty approach.

Chronic pain management includes counseling, behavioral therapy, physical exercise, pharmacological therapy, interventional procedures like nerve blocks, neurolysis, radio frequency ablations mostly under fluoroscopic and occasionally CT guided.

What is interventional pain management?
Interventional pain management is the methods intended to diagnose and treat the pain-related disorders to manage the sub-acute, chronic, persistent and intractable pain, independently or in conjunction with other modalities of treatments.

What kind of the patients will benefit?
Any patient with unrelieved, intractable, incapacitating pain of more than a month duration need special attention. Exclusive pain management strategy necessary for the group of the patients with pain disorders like headache, neck pain, back pain, neuralgias, fibromyalgia, CRPS, ischemic vascular pain and cancer pain.

If any of the following questionnaire fact file is "YES" then the patient should have pain consultant's service.
1. Are you unable to work because of pain?
2. Does pain restrict your daily activities?
3. Have you had pain lasting more than three months?
4. Does your pain affect your relationship with others?
5. Are you feeling depressed because of unrelieved pain?
6. Nothing is working to relieve your pain?
How to qualify yourself?

Anesthesiologist are already familiar to provide peri operative pain relief, So performing interventional procedures need only improvement of techniques under fluoroscopy. An anesthesiologist who desire to start pain practice needs knowledge & training for chronic pain management. Best way to start is reading standard text books of chronic pain management. After having some basic knowledge, attending the pain conferences & workshops will definitely improve your knowledge and technical skills.

The next wiser thing is attending training courses. Now in India few authorized training programs on chronic pain management are available. Get enough clinical exposure yourself. Then start the simple procedures that you are already familiar. Get your training in stages i.e. lumbar injections, radiofrequency procedures, cervical procedures, disc procedures, then advanced procedures like spinal cord stimulators, intrathecal drug delivery system, vertebroplasty and kyphoplasty.

Always try to acquire some fellowships from pain institutions or organized bodies. This will definitely make yourself more qualified in the field of the speciality.

How to start Pain Practice?

All the practicing anesthesiologist are too busy to allot time to do exclusive pain practice. This the prime hurdle to cross. Unless you start exclusive out patient service, you will not be recognized as a pain specialist or consultant. The exclusive out patient service will be easier not only for the patients but also for the referring doctors.

Starting of Pain Clinic

Before starting your pain clinic you need good business strategy. Complete workup regarding location of the clinic, financial capability, staff pattern, advertisement plans, promotional activities should be ready before starting the venture. Your clinic should be located in convenient place for the patients and for the referring physicians. Minimal space requirement will be 1600 to 2000 sqft. The basic requirements are reception & patient waiting area, consultation room, sterile procedural room, post procedure observation room. Physiotherapy and other amenities are optional depending on space availability.

Types of the Pain Clinic

Depending on the financial capability, your Pain Clinic either may be an individual / independent or hospital based.

Independent Pain Clinic

Independent Pain Clinic will requires higher financial encumbrance but provides higher income return. You can promote your own institution. You have total control of the institution.

Hospital based Pain Clinic
It is the part of a Multi speciality hospital, hence it requires less investment, and easy to manage. You can utilize the existing facilities. You will basically promote the clinic at the hospital. Your income is also limited.

**Equipment requirements**
- Fluoroscopy / C Arm
- Fluoroscopy Table
- Radio frequency generator
- Ozone generator
- Portable infusion devices
- Autoclave unit
- Furnitures
- Disposables
- Others

**Advertisement & Promotional Activity**

Pain medicine is relatively newer speciality in India. Awareness about the chronic pain management is very low in the society. Continuous awareness program about the pain conditions that can be treated & modern treatment facilities available should be conducted among various forums, and also in various media like press, TV. Educational handouts in regional languages, exhibition for publics about chronic pain treatment will also help you to reach the public.

Advertise about your clinic, facilities available, in various modes depending on your financial ability. Social network is an attractive and effective mode for providing information. Exclusive own website is very much essential now a days.

**Pearls for Good practice**
1. Develop an algorithm for the particular pain.
2. Learn three dimensional view concept of the fluoroscopy
3. Have experienced physicians present when performing procedures for the first time.
4. Know all about your equipments
5. Update recent trends.

Pain imposes burden on those who suffer from it. Burdens are not confined to the individual sufferer as their disability affects their family and the society. Chronic pain impairs quality of an individual’s life. It’s clear that unrelieved pain is a global health problem that is increasing significantly. So, the concept of chronic pain management & Pain Clinic are the need of hour.

**Suggested Text book References**
3. Textbook on pain management, Muralidhar Joshi, (2nd Ed), Joshi institute of pain publications.

Web links
2. Pain Physician www.asipp.org
3. www.iasp-pain.org International Association for the Study of Pain
4. www.ampainsoc.org American Pain Society
6. www.iasp.com
7. For further queries feel free to contact me at iipmchennai@hotmail.com