



Introducing Health Sciences: The Pain Clinic

Effects of Chronic Pain

Commentary

Back at the Real Health Institute our eight patients are nearing the end of their four week course. Because previous treatments have, at least for them, only been partially successful and sometimes not helped at all, there are a lot of hopes pinned on the outcome of this course.

Man

Because we understand pain from a bio-psycho-social perspective we attempt to address most of those aspects, at least to a degree, so it is very much an interdisciplinary approach because the presentation of how people experience the pain is far too complex for a single clinician to address all the issues that are being presented. So we have a medical doctor, pain specialist, on the program. The role of the doctor is very much to help people to understand their pain better and to understand the mechanisms the pain, and to re-conceptualise their understanding of the pain experience.

Man

I've had an operation, I had a trapped blood vessel in my neck, I had to have an operation on that, I had a nerve done on my elbow, release, I've had, I've had eight operations altogether on my arm up to now, and I've got another one coming on Monday.

Woman

I had an epidural injection, I've had two facet injections, I've had four caudal injections, two lots of prolotherapy, physiotherapy stuff, you know, acupuncture, all of it, giving it all a good go.

Woman

You name it I've been on it, yeah, lots of tablets, and still am on lots of tablets, and other physio's and hydrotherapy, and acupuncture, you know you do get to a stage where you give up actually but this has been great.

Man

I think the moment a person experiences pain that is not going to go away all your assumptions about your health and well-being, you know, are being shattered and also plans for the future, and careers and family life, etcetera, everything all of a sudden is being exposed and being challenged, and that is causing major challenges emotionally and psychologically just to think that my identity is to climb mountains or to run marathons, and I've got a very active job and career, and I'm a very active parent and partner, etcetera, and all of a sudden you find it's difficult to carry on with my career, it's difficult to engage in activity with my family, the plans, our future plans, or retirement plans all of a sudden everything is at stake and nothing comes automatically any longer, and it's almost a bereavement/grieving process, and for the person to move towards acceptance of their condition and not a passive acceptance, a very active one, while building on fitness and strength and engaging in activity, despite excruciating pain.