

Healthy Pain Strategies

"We can expand our patients perception of what we do by offering healthy strategies that are as effective as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs."

We've witnessed it in our practice and statistics support it, pain is the most common reason people seek medical advice. Is it any surprise that pain medication is the most frequently purchased over-the-counter medication? What percentage of your supplement dispensary is pain related? And, are you satisfied with the range of options you have to treat pain?

Often patients get a limited perspective of what we do, but we can expand their perception if we remind them that we offer healthy strategies that are just as effective as, maybe even more effective as, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs or NSAIDs. Let's help our patients understand that although NSAIDs are effective for the short term, they can cause arthritic changes in joints, internal bleeding ... even death.

According to the July 27, 1998 issue of the American Journal of Medicine "Conservative



calculations estimate that approximately 107,000 patients are hospitalized annually for NSAID related GI complications and at least 16,500 NSAID deaths occur each year among arthritis patients alone."

Let's review some pain reduction strategies. You're familiar with many of them; but by covering all the bases, we can increase results especially for those tough cases.

Let's face it, nothing works for everybody. Obviously diet is essential. We want to stop

feeding the inflammatory fires created by a diet that is drenched in refined sugars and starches and hydrogenated oils. The standard American diet is lacking in dietary antioxidants and buffering minerals.

I like to use the diet from the "3-Step Detox." It's a great way to introduce your patients to an anti-inflammatory diet. It is a gluten/dairy free diet designed to be devoid of the major allergens. I always tell patients do the best you can with the diet and keep a food journal. See if you can detect

any foods associated with your pain and stiffness. I want them to become part of the healing process and take responsibility for what goes into their mouth.

Of course physical manipulation is always suggested whenever possible. Movement creates an environment where cells can be nourished and toxins removed.

As I see it, pain strategies can be broken into 4 categories: EFAs, vitamin D, enzymes and botanicals. We've covered EFAs and enzymes on other Tuesday Minutes, so we won't belabor them here. You can reference those discussions below.

We've also examined vitamin D in many contexts; but according to the Mayo Clinic Proceedings, December 9, 2003, vitamin D deficiencies have been indicated as a cause of chronic pain. Further confirmations came from the January 2003 edition of the journal "Spine." It showed 83% of the 299 patients studied with chronic low back pain in Saudi Arabia had abnormally low levels of vitamin D. After treatment, clinical improvement in symptoms was seen in the groups that had low levels of vitamin D and in 95% of all the patients in the study. Vitamin D deficiency can also be a cause of inflammation, which can further contribute to pain.

MMP9 is a protein in the matrix metalloproteinase family and is involved in the breakdown of extracellular matrix in normal physiological processes as well as in disease processes such as arthritis and metastasis. Vitamin D supplementation caused a 68% reduction in MMP9 as well as a 23% reduction in the inflammatory marker CRP.

In terms of botanical combinations, Sculacia has been one of my favorites for many years. It comes from two different plants; Skullcap and

Catechu from Acacia. Skullcap is used for its anti-inflammatory, anti-tumor activity and also has the ability to reduce the TH2 fraction of the immune system. Catechu is historically used to treat hypertension, diarrhea and stomach problems like dysentery and colitis.

This botanical compound provides an all natural patented blend of two different classes of flavanoids: free-B-ring flavanoids and flavins. Various environmental factors increase cytokines which in turn increase the expression of cyclooxygenase-2 (COX-2) and 5-lipoxygenase. At a cellular level, these enzymes convert arachidonic acid to inflammatory metabolites like prostaglandins, thromboxanes and leukotrienes. The beauty of this blend of flavanoids is the inhibition of both Cox-2 and 5-lipoxygenase; however, it does not block the anti-inflammatory enzyme COX-1.

Sculacia is Biotics Research Corporation's premier product for the joint pain associated with osteoarthritis. Use 1-2 capsules three times a day. As mobility and stiffness subside reduce to patient comfort levels.

Teaching your patients to live on an anti-inflammatory diet, maintaining sufficient levels of vitamin D, proper levels of EFAs and the use of enzymes and flavanoid blends like Sculacia may take a little attitude change. But helping our patients discover a wellness lifestyle now will yield benefits for life. We have a great opportunity when we consider how the media is creating an awareness that natural alternatives are the coming trend. You'll gain confidence from your patients by letting them know that the science of Wellness is gaining momentum because it works, and that you have been on the forefront of this health revolution for years.

Thanks for reading this week's edition. I'll see you next Tuesday.