Multidisciplinary Management of Chronic Pain

Sridhar Vasudevan

Multidisciplinary Management of Chronic Pain

A Practical Guide for Clinicians

Springer

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*This book is dedicated to Joyce Anne
Vasudevan, my best friend, mentor,
and supportive wife*

Foreword

Twenty-odd years ago, Dr. Sridhar Vasudevan prepared an outstanding and well-received guide for patients with chronic pain. By the time that valuable overview appeared, Dr. Vasudevan was already regarded as a master clinician whose empathy, ability to motivate patients through recovery, and knack for distilling complex phenomena into simple, striking metaphors was widely acclaimed. Since then, Dr. Vasudevan has continued his string of accomplishments and service not only to patients with pain and their loved ones, but also to the broad community of health care professionals involved in their care. This latter service has ranged from the presidency of the American Academy of Pain Medicine (AAPM), an organization founded by pain physicians, to multiple professional and patient-centered leadership roles.

During the past decade, many members of the pain community and organizations such as AAPM have recognized the huge social and economic burden of pain and the need for education of frontline practitioners about it. Primary care is where the majority of pain problems are seen and treated—ideally, with sufficient expertise and promptness to avoid their evolving into disabling, demeaning (and stigmatized) chronic pain. In this concise yet comprehensive gem of a volume, Sri Vasudevan has combined a summary of the specialist pain literature with personal insight and expertise, including his own metaphors that he uses to explain in a reassuring, even therapeutic fashion many clinical aspects of pain.

I believe this guide will be read and used as a resource not only by health care providers, but also by those patients and their families who want to delve deeper into a current, well-informed understanding of their condition and to support self-management whenever possible. As president-elect of AAPM, I am proud to count Sri Vasudevan among the ranks of its outstanding leaders and role models.

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Foreword

For over 20 years, I was involved in a multidisciplinary chronic pain treatment team at a major academic hospital. As one of the leading programs in the country, we had frequent visits from health professionals from around the world. Many were practitioners who were familiar with multidisciplinary pain treatment but wanted to learn much more about the practical aspects of evaluating and treating patients with complex, chronic pain problems. Invariably, a visitor would ask, “Why don’t you write a practical guide to multidisciplinary pain treatment that includes all the tips and suggestions you’ve shared with us?” At the time, we were focused more on publishing rigorous research studies, an effort that eventually led to my publishing over 300 papers on pain assessment and treatment. The book, unfortunately, never was written.

At present, the need for practical information for clinicians managing chronic pain has never been greater. Chronic pain has reached epidemic proportions with yearly costs exceeding those of heart disease and cancer combined. Well-intentioned efforts to manage chronic pain by liberalizing the use of opioids has have disastrous consequences in the USA in that it has been accompanied by a significant rise in opioid-related deaths and disability. Although injections and surgery have helped some patients with chronic pain in the short run, their effectiveness in the long run is increasingly questioned. To make matters worse, in the past 10 years many established multidisciplinary pain programs in the USA have been closed or downsized. As a result, most patients with entrenched and complex problems coping with pain are now being treated in the primary care setting. There is growing recognition among primary care doctors of the limitations of their traditional approaches to medically treating these patients and heightened interest in multidisciplinary approaches that can be integrated into the primary care setting.

Over the course of a long career, Sridhar Vasudevan has had a rich set of experiences in multidisciplinary pain management. He has been involved in providing pain rehabilitation services since 1973 and has treated thousands of patients suffering from chronic pain. Furthermore, as director of a pain clinic for 10 years and then as medical director of a comprehensive pain program for more than 27 years, he is intimately familiar with how to integrate the expertise of professionals from multiple

disciplines so as to meet the unique needs of a given patient. I first met Dr. Vasudevan at major pain research meetings held in the USA and abroad where he was actively involved in both giving and attending presentations. In many ways, he has always struck me as the embodiment of the scientist-practitioner, i.e., one who not only can understand and incorporate scientific advances into his practice, but whose clinical experiences inform and shape his own (and others') research.

In this book, Dr. Vasudevan draws upon an accumulated reservoir of clinical expertise to provide readers with an up-to-date and highly readable clinical guide to multidisciplinary pain management. The book provides numerous practical tips and suggestions. These include simple diagrams, analogies, and anecdotes that can be used to help patients understand the complexity of chronic pain. Used as part of a treatment rationale, such approaches can enhance the ability of patients to engage with and follow through with treatment recommendations such as the need to exercise, increase activity level, and use relaxation and other cognitive behavioral approaches. The book addresses controversial issues that primary care physicians struggle with such as the utility of chronic opioid therapy. Concerns related to the increased use of spinal fusions for chronic back pain are highlighted, such as costs, recovery time, and complications. Practitioners in primary care settings will find the chapter on evaluation of disability in patients with chronic pain especially helpful.

One of the most interesting and unique chapters in this book is the one entitled "Creating a Multidisciplinary Team." The chapter chronicles the demise of multidisciplinary programs in the USA, a trend that occurred despite the fact that the evidence base for this approach has never been stronger. Interestingly, because of this evidence base, the multidisciplinary approach is thriving in countries outside the USA. Undaunted by the downturn in funding for multidisciplinary programs, Dr. Vasudevan recently has been teaching health professionals how they can develop their own "virtual" multidisciplinary treatment teams. He draws on that experience in this chapter and provides numerous practical tips for identifying patients most likely to benefit from this approach and for finding professionals in one's local area who are suited to this work. Dr. Vasudevan also addresses key issues such as developing and sustaining cross-disciplinary communication, something critical to treatment success. Practitioners will find his discussion of the roles of key virtual members of a multidisciplinary pain management team (physicians/nurse practitioners, physical therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists/counselors) to be especially helpful.

The virtual multidisciplinary team represents a cost-effective approach to providing high-quality clinical care to patients suffering from chronic pain. It is likely to become widely used in the future. Advances in technology, such as the shared electronic medical record, face-to-face video communication over the Internet, and self-management applications to support pain management, will play an important role in the implementation of such virtual approaches to chronic pain management.

The chapter on "Patient Stories" is intriguing because it makes the multidisciplinary pain management approach come alive. Three detailed case studies are presented, all of which illustrate the tragic history of events that all too often set the stage for chronic pain. Each of these case studies describes the psychological and

social devastation that can be wrought by chronic pain. The iatrogenic effects of medical approaches designed to help each patient are nicely illustrated. These case studies strongly show how multidisciplinary treatment approaches can work together to address biological, psychological, and social factors that may be contributing to pain.

Considered overall, this timely and well-written book has much to offer. Because it is loaded with clinical tips, health professionals from all disciplines who work with patients with chronic pain will find it useful. If only this book were available years ago, so that when a visitor to our own program had asked for a practical guide to multidisciplinary pain management we could have handed him this book.

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The Journal of the International Association for the Study of Pain

Foreword

Dr. Vasudevan is a true champion of multidisciplinary pain management, and this book is a testament to his many years of patient care, research, and teaching in this endeavor. His target in this volume is the health care provider who treats chronic pain patients and recognizes that traditional biomedicine does not provide adequate diagnostic or therapeutic tools. After a brief introduction, he first outlines the problem of chronic pain and lays out all the issues. Next is a chapter on the various theories of the mechanisms for chronic pain. Brief presentations of the various explanations for chronic pain are helpful to understand the multidisciplinary approach to chronic pain management. The fourth chapter, written by Drs. Smerz and Grunert, describes cognitive behavioral strategies that are useful in the treatment of patients suffering from chronic pain. The fifth chapter describes many of the treatments aimed at chronic pain patients that have no proven utility for the patient although they may generate significant revenue for the provider.

Chapter 6 is the meat of this book, as it describes how to treat the chronic pain patient with a rehabilitative program that is based upon a biopsychosocial model. All aspects of this therapeutic program are outlined, including the optimal use of pharmacologic agents. The risks of long-term opioid use are thoroughly discussed. The essential principle of this type of treatment is that the patient must do the work to overcome his pain and suffering; health care providers offer guidance, teach skills, and provide support for what is for most patients a difficult journey.

Chapter 7 addresses the evaluation of disability and how the provider should interact with the patient and the disability system. Unfortunately, the latter often undermines rehabilitative treatments for chronic pain patients. Chapter 8 is important, as Dr. Vasudevan addresses the often thorny issue of creating and maintaining an interdisciplinary team for patient management. Chapters 9 and 10 address some of the common chronic pain diagnoses: low back pain, fibromyalgia, myofascial pain syndromes, and complex regional pain syndromes. Several patient stories precede the concluding chapter, which summarizes the key points presented in the prior chapters. Clinical pearls that are derived from the author's personal experiences are found in every chapter. Each chapter is followed by suggested readings and references germane to the topics discussed. The experiences gleaned from running his

rehabilitation program for chronic pain patients provide the reader with insights that can only be obtained through years of practice.

Dr. Vasudevan authored a superb book in 1993 aimed at those who suffer from chronic pain, and he has published extensively in the scientific literature. He has been an active participant in most of the pain-related professional societies and has served as president of many of them. He is one of a small number of physicians who espouse and implement a biopsychosocial approach to chronic pain patients, in spite of the financial difficulties that one faces when procedures are not the primary treatment strategy for chronic pain patients. The treatment program that he describes is found much more commonly in Europe than in the USA, even though it was first described and implemented in this country. Multidisciplinary pain management is more cost-effective than procedure-based care, and those countries with a rational health care system favor it over serial single-modality treatments. The biopsychosocial model is essential for the successful treatment of chronic pain patients. Hopefully, this book and the people who utilize its principles will be able to influence the funding of health care for chronic pain in the USA.

Dr. Vasudevan does a wonderful job describing multidisciplinary pain management, its components, and the strategies one can use in treating those who suffer from chronic pain. This is a resource to be treasured and deserves wide dissemination to primary care and allied practitioners.

John D. Loeser, MD

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Past President of the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP)
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Foreword

Dr. Sridhar Vasudevan, a well-known physician who practices management of patients with chronic pain, has written a clear, concise, and understandable book on the multidisciplinary pain approach.

The book explains the “four legs” of treatment including behavioral/psychological, rehabilitation, pharmacological, and interventional approaches to chronic pain syndrome. It provides a basis for a successful philosophy behind a multidisciplinary pain approach which is an increase in function with less dependence on the health care system and more utilization of personal strategies.

The book covers successful theories behind the treatment of chronic pain including alternative techniques, common problems seen and, most compelling, the profile of patients with chronic pain syndrome. It concisely and eloquently summarizes the current theories of pain involved in the patient with chronic pain and provides the rationale for the need for multidisciplinary care.

Multidisciplinary Management of Chronic Pain: A Practical Guide for Clinicians is easy to read and understand for clinical health care personnel who evaluate and treat patients with chronic pain and will greatly help them in the understanding of the complexities and treatment of chronic pain. *This book is a “must have” reference in the office of any physician or clinician who works with patients with chronic pain.*

Martin Grabois, MD

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Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Martha Rosenberg for helping with editing of this book, providing illustrations and bringing my dreams to reality.

I am indebted to my colleagues in the field of pain medicine who have been my friends and mentors and increased the understanding and treatment of pain, helping patients everywhere.

I would like to thank the physicians who have entrusted their patients with pain to my care over four decades.

I would also like to thank the rehabilitation teams at the pain programs and hospitals where I have worked. They have helped my patients take a “different road” from that of so many chronic pain patients who are not exposed to, or not given access to, multidisciplinary pain rehabilitation programs.

I am filled with appreciation for my patients who, despite adversity, display admirable effort and tenacity in learning to their control pain and its toll on their lives.

I would like to thank my deceased parents who instilled a work ethic and spirit of volunteerism in me.

I would like to thank my sons John and Michael and my daughter-in-law Kate who have provided love over the years and my grandchildren Molly and Kate, who add meaning to my life.

I would like to thank my brother Raj who has been a friend, motivator, cheerleader and supporter for all my activities in life which has been invaluable.

I will always be grateful for my mentor John Melvin, M.D., who was my teacher and chairman of the Department of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation at the Medical College of Wisconsin, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, from 1974 to 1987. He encouraged my involvement in pain rehabilitation even as a resident and has remained a friend and supporter over years.

Finally, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to Springer and my editor Ms. Janice Stern for her encouragement and patience to bring my philosophy of multidisciplinary care to treat “people with pain, and not focus on pain alone” to a wider audience.

Dr. Sridhar Vasudevan

Biography of Sridhar Vasudevan, M.D.

Sridhar Vasudevan graduated from the Government Medical College, in Aurangabad, India, in 1972. He completed his residency in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, between 1974 and 1977. He is board certified in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation as well as Pain Medicine, by the American Board of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. He is also board certified in Electro-diagnostic Medicine, Disability Medicine and Pain Medicine.

Vasudevan served as a full-time faculty from 1977 to 1987 in the Department. Of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the **Medical College of Wisconsin** in Milwaukee, and continued as a clinical professor of PM&R in that department since 1992.

Vasudevan is **Past president** of the **Midwest Pain Society**, the **American Academy of Pain Medicine**, the **Wisconsin Society of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation**, the **American College of Pain Medicine** (now the **American Board of Pain Medicine**), and the **Waukesha County Medical Society**.

He has served on the **Board of Directors** of the American Pain Society, Midwest Pain Society, Wisconsin Society of PM&R, American Academy of Pain Medicine, Waukesha County Medical Society, Sheboygan County Medical Society, the National Pain Foundation, the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Wisconsin Medical Society (WMS), the WMS Foundation and WMS Political Action Committee.

Vasudevan continues to **practice pain rehabilitation since 1977**. His current clinical practice is at the **Medical College of Wisconsin-Froedtert hospital Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation clinic**, specializing in Spine and Pain Rehabilitation, at the North Hills Health Center in **Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin**.

Vasudevan has presented several national meetings, as well as, **invited presentations at international meetings** in Israel, India, Mexico, Austria, USSR, and People's Republic of China, Germany, Aruba, Canada, Denmark, Brazil, South Africa, Australia, Turkey, Argentina and Scotland. Dr. Vasudevan continues to be active in other community volunteer activities and has served as the past president of the Father's Club of Marquette University High School, past president of the Brookfield Sunset Rotary Club, as well as the past president of Mequon-Thiensville Rotary Club and a member of the Sheboygan West Rotary Club. **He is currently an active member of the Rotary Club of Port Washington-Saukville, Wisconsin and had served on the Board of Advisors of the Feith YMCA of Port Washington-Saukville.**

He has authored several peer-reviewed articles in journals and many chapters in medical textbooks on topics of pain and disability and is an author of a book written for individuals with chronic pain and their families called **"Pain: A four letter word you can live with"**.

Vasudevan was presented by the American Academy of Pain Medicine with the **Philip Lippe award** for "outstanding contributions to the social and clinical aspects of pain medicine" in February 1998. In addition he was awarded the **"Distinguished Clinician Award"** and the **"Distinguished Member Award"** by the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. Dr. Vasudevan received **"The Spirit of Caring Award"** from Community Memorial Hospital/Medical Associates/advanced Health care, in Menomonee Falls in 2008.

Vasudevan is married to his supportive wife, Joyce. He is proud of his two sons. John Vasudevan, M.D (1979), who is a full time faculty member, in the department of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation at University of Pennsylvania. His son, Michael Vasudevan (1982) works in the IT department at Marquette University, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He is a proud grandfather of two grand-daughters.

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