What is Chronic Pain?

Chronic Pain is pain persisting for more than three months. It is a complex condition that influences behaviors, thoughts, and mood. People with chronic pain may experience consequences such as:

- Decreased physical, social, and recreational activities
- Feeling down, anxious, or irritable
- Poor performance at work, school, or home
- Loss of self-esteem and self-confidence
- Trouble with attention, concentration, or memory

Why CBT-CP?

When Veterans experience pain due to an acute condition, there are often a number of treatments that can effectively address the underlying cause of their pain and it resolves as expected. Because of the complexity of chronic pain, however, the physical symptoms and related functional issues are often not adequately managed by medical treatment alone. Chronic pain must be approached as a condition, with the Veteran and provider working together to maximize quality of life despite persistent pain.

Without proper pain education, Veterans may have unrealistic expectations about their treatment, contributing to increased frustration and hopelessness as they struggle to cope with their ongoing pain concerns. Understandable but maladaptive responses will often lead to other co-occurring problems such as depression, loss of physical functioning, and deficits in social and recreational activities. These life changes may sustain negative views about oneself and the healthcare system.

The CBT-CP model approaches chronic pain holistically, helping the Veteran appropriately address the social, psychological, and physical impacts of chronic pain. The emphasis is on increasing Veteran’s self-efficacy around the self-management of pain with the adoption of adaptive expectations and coping skills. While relieving pain intensity is always desirable, the focus of CBT-CP is to improve overall functioning and quality of life.
Who does CBT-CP work for?

CBT-CP helps those experiencing negative pain-related consequences in areas such as physical, social, and emotional functioning. Many veterans with chronic pain have psychiatric comorbidities like depression, PTSD, and substance use disorders. As long as participants are psychologically stable, they can benefit from learning skills for managing chronic pain, and these skills may even help with other conditions.

What does CBT-CP involve?

CBT-CP treatment consists of an interview and assessment session and 10 active, skills-based therapy sessions. A follow-up session to review implementation and discuss any areas of difficulty is also encouraged. When possible, weekly sessions are recommended to maximize benefits.

References


Internet Resources:

- [http://www.va.gov/PAINMANAGEMENT/](http://www.va.gov/PAINMANAGEMENT/)
- [http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org/diseasesconditions/ChronicPain/](http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org/diseasesconditions/ChronicPain/)
- [http://theacpa.org/](http://theacpa.org/)

Consult with your Local Evidence-Based Psychotherapy (EBP) Coordinator or contact a clinician in your area who has completed the VA CBT-CP training. Visit the CBT-CP SharePoint site for additional information and materials: [https://vaww.vha.esp.va.gov/sites/CBTCP](https://vaww.vha.esp.va.gov/sites/CBTCP)