

Relief

It's hard to understand what it's like living with chronic pain unless you've been there. Some have a mild nagging pain that is a constant annoyance. For others, the pain is so severe it can control their daily life.

Dr. Jerry Waters, of Oroville Hospital, understands pain. For 16 years he practiced anesthesia. His job, plainly put, was to make sure that his patients wouldn't feel any pain during surgery. After being in a major auto accident, he turned his attention to interventional pain management (IPM) and primary care. His focus of IPM is limited to those patients with chronic back pain.

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His technique is to administer fluoroscopic guided injections. The fluoroscope is a live X-ray that guides the needle, and the injections consist of an anesthetic and a steroid that act as an anti-inflammatory. The resulting, dramatic relief from chronic pain can last for weeks, months or even longer, although full benefit may not be experienced after the first injection; it may take more than one injection over a few weeks' or months' time to experience optimum relief. It is not for everyone and patients do vary in their response to treatment.



Oroville Hospital

The goal of interventional pain management is to relieve pain and improve the patient's quality of life through the most minimally invasive methods.

This type of treatment also aims to return a patient to his or her normal, everyday activities as soon as possible, with a decreased reliance on pain medications.

“Not every patient will benefit from these treatments—some patients can find relief through physical therapy, while others may need surgery. This procedure wouldn't be right for someone that has a herniated disc pushing on the nerve,” says Waters.

That's why he first performs diagnostic tests on each patient to make sure a fluoroscopic guided procedure is warranted.

“My patients have ranged from as young as 18 to as old as 94. The pain is usually in the back or neck, and the most common causes are arthritis, injuries, and stenosis,” says Waters. Stenosis is when the spinal canal narrows.

Another term you'll often hear is sciatica, which is actually a symptom of what could be several different problems. That is why a treatment that works for one person who is suffering from sciatica, may not work for someone else with the same symptoms.

We all have our personal war stories from life—sports injuries, car accidents, or just plain klutziness—luckily, most of us don't have to live with that pain forever. For those who do, Dr. Waters offers an excellent option in managing chronic pain.

“It is extremely gratifying to see a patient free of debilitating pain,” says a smiling Dr. Waters. “It can change their whole outlook on life.”

