

# The Relevance of Chronic Pain

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**This is not a perfect world**

**Pain is ...**

**... a part of our life...**

**... our bodyguard, vitally protective!**

**But pain is ...**

**... also what we seek most to avoid!**

**And when pain has become chronic,  
it is persistent torment!**

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**Acute**

# **Pain**

**Chronic**

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**Yes**

Noxious insult

**No**

**Yes**

Biological function

**No**

**Yes**

Self-limiting

**No**

**No**

Social consequences

**Yes**

**No**

Psychological consequences

**Yes**

**Easy**

Therapy

**Difficult**

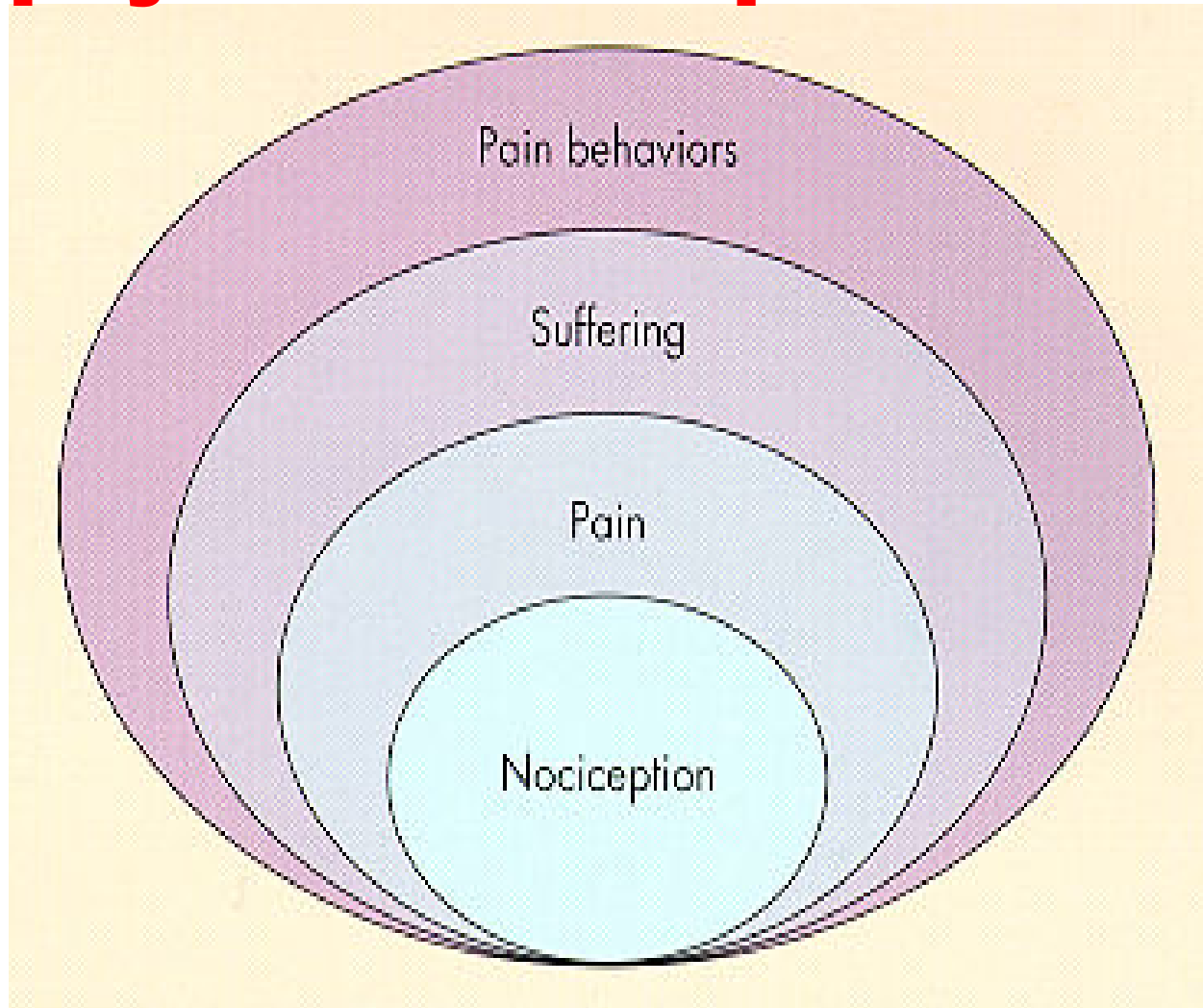
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**Normal  
response to  
tissue damage**

**A disease in itself**

# Chronic Pain

“bio-psycho-social phenomenon”



A disease in itself, not a symptom

According to WHO, “pain can kill”, but chronic pain also has social consequences: inability to work, be active and participate in social life.

Societal costs of chronic pain are comparable to those for cancer or cardiovascular disease.

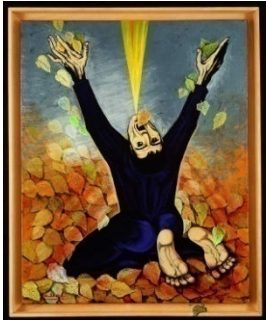
Chronic unrelieved pain is a major unsolved healthcare problem worldwide.

## The problem...

inadequate professional and public awareness of the societal impact of **chronic pain as a disease !**

- Rheumatologists treat joint diseases,
- Orthopedists treat bone diseases,
- Oncologists treat cancer,

... But chronic pain is notoriously mistaken as **“just a symptom”!**



# Europe Against Pain

“While acute pain may reasonably be considered a symptom of disease or injury, chronic and recurrent pain is a specific healthcare problem,  
**A DISEASE IN ITS OWN RIGHT!...**”

EFIC DECLARATION, Oct. 2001

## European Federation of IASP® Chapters



- Multidisciplinary professional organization in the field of pain medicine established in 1993.
- 34 National Pain Societies = Chapters of IASP® (International Association for the Study of Pain) from 34 European countries.
- Some 20.000 scientists, physicians, nurses, physiotherapists, psychologists and other healthcare professionals, who study pain and treat patients suffering from pain.

Forum for collaboration and communication between national pain societies and other bodies interested or involved in pain research or pain therapy.



## 2<sup>nd</sup> SIP Symposium

### To make chronic pain "visible":



- Major cause of suffering and reduced quality of life
- Underestimated long-term outcome of e.g.:
  - Cancer
  - Ageing
  - Traumatic injuries
  - Nerve damage
  - Surgery
  - Insufficient treatment of acute pain
- Challenge to patients, physicians, healthcare systems, policy makers, budget holders and strategic decision makers.

# 2<sup>nd</sup> SIP Symposium



- Program endorsed by over 85 national and international organisations.
- Ensure awareness of human suffering and costs to society due to undertreated chronic pain!
- Provide a platform for representatives of all stakeholders and member states to interact.
- Call for a European-wide stakeholder network to:
  - Share best practice
  - Define high-quality pain management
  - Develop a framework and indicators of quality pain care
  - To develop concepts for active and healthy ageing among the European population

# Pain is a very common problem in older individuals

Pain prevalence in persons  $\geq 70$  years:

79% of females

53% of males

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Bergh, 2003, J Pain Symptom Management



## Pain is undertreated in older persons!

# Chronic pain... an under-recognized “epidemic”

- 46,394 adult respondents ( $\geq 18$  years):
- Chronic pain (moderate to severe intensity) in **19% of adult Europeans**, seriously affecting the quality of their social and working lives.
- **19% had lost their job**
- **13% had changed jobs**, because of their pain.
- 60% visited their doctor about their pain **2-9 times in the last six months**
- Only **2%** were currently treated by a pain management specialist.

Breivik H, Collett B, Ventafridda V, Cohen R, Gallacher D. Survey of chronic pain in Europe: prevalence, impact on daily life, and treatment. *Eur J Pain* 2006;10(4):287-33.

# Unmet Needs



- Inadequate knowledge and information about pain management
- Chronic pain management not a priority with governments and health providers
- Inadequate resources for pain research
- Inadequate resources for expensive treatments including innovative analgesics and dedicated pain management teams

**Chronic pain is not just a symptom of an ongoing disease.**

**Chronic pain is a disease of the nervous system that must be aggressively treated, independently of the ongoing underlying disease.**

Allan I. Basbaum