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Medical Students Need Training to Approach Chronic Pain

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Dear Editor,

I read with great interest the article “The Patient-Provider Relationship in Chronic Pain Management: Where Do We Go From Here?”, recently published on your journal [1]. Chronic pain affects around 20% of the population in the developed world, and in spite of outstanding advances in pain management over the past decades, it remains a significant health problem that has a deep impact on individuals and their families. From my point of view, as a medical student, the prevention and treatment of chronic pain require a multidisciplinary approach, which also involves the attention that schools of medicine address to chronic pain management within their curricula. The increasing prevalence of chronic health conditions and related chronic pain would have to encourage Schools of Medicine to develop initiatives to incorporate population-based medicine and chronic pain care into medical education in order to give to medical students (who will be the caregivers of tomorrow) the guidance in learning dynamic models and approaches related to pain management and prevention. In conclusion, ask any clinician which patients he or she considers most difficult to manage, and odds are patients with chronic pain will top the list. For this reason, as medical educators, schools of medicine would be prone to prepare students to meet the challenges of pain-related escalating health problems, the increasing burden of chronic diseases, and health disparities and to respond to the unique resource needs of patients suffering from chronic or acute pain. These challenges will require that future physicians develop a population perspective that focuses on health promotion and disease prevention for pain-related health problems in their communities and disease management in their practices.

Reference

1 Matthias MS, Bair MJ. The patient-provider relationship in chronic pain management: Where do we go from here? Pain Med 2010;11:1747–9.