

# Key Messages About Pain

## Pain is a national health care crisis. It is our nation's hidden epidemic.

- According to the Institute of Medicine (IOM), approximately **100 million** adults in the United States suffer from common chronic pain conditions.<sup>1</sup>
- The annual cost of chronic pain in the U.S. is estimated to be **\$560-635 billion**, including health care expenses, lost income, and lost productivity.<sup>1</sup>

## When pain is properly managed, many people can resume their lives.

- Finding good pain care can be a challenge, but persistence can pay off – don't give up.
- Learn about available treatment options. Often, pain management requires an integrative and multi-modal treatment approach. This could mean combining the use of pain medication with surgical interventions and complementary approaches like physical therapy, massage and acupuncture. But, remember that pain is unique – what works for you might not work for someone else.
- People often mistakenly believe that pain is something they “just have to live with.” They are often made to feel that the pain is “just in their heads.” Seek out support and offer it to others in their pain journey; validation and letting someone know that you believe their reports of pain can be a lifeline!

## People with pain are a central component to the pain care team, and must take an active role in their care.

- Through being your own advocate, or an advocate for someone you care about, you become empowered – with information, knowledge and self-respect.
- The IOM recommends that health care provider organizations take the lead in developing educational approaches and materials for people with pain and their families that promote and enable self-management.
- Following a treatment plan and the safe storage and disposal of medications are important components of appropriate self-management of pain.

## People who live with pain have a right to appropriate assessment and treatment of their pain.

- While pain can affect anyone regardless of gender, race or economic status, some people have difficulty getting adequate pain care. Women, certain ethnic groups and the elderly are more likely to be denied appropriate pain treatment.<sup>2-4</sup>
- People who suffer from pain and their loved ones need to speak with their health care professional and take an active role in managing their pain.
- Pain *can* and *should* be treated. We all have a right to proper medical care.

## References

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