

Fibromyalgia

March 18, 2009

Fibromyalgia is characterized by chronic pain and tender points. The pain associated with this syndrome is worse in the morning and has been described by as stabbing and shooting pain with deep muscular aching, throbbing, and twitching. Other symptoms include fatigue (profound exhaustion and poor stamina), sleep problems due to disturbances in their sleep cycle, vestibular/cochlear/vision problems, and even impaired memory.

According to the National Fibromyalgia Association, fibromyalgia is considered a syndrome rather than a disease because of the lack of a specific and identifiable cause related to the collection of signs and symptoms of fibromyalgia. This syndrome has also been called fibromyalgia syndrome, fibromyositis, and fibrositis.

Fibromyalgia is among the most common chronic pain conditions, affecting about 10 million people in the United States and 3-6% of the world population. Most of the people with fibromyalgia are women, but the syndrome is also seen in men and children of all ethnic groups. Generally, the syndrome is diagnosed between 20 to 50 years of age, becoming more common with age.

The cause of fibromyalgia is still unknown; however, current research is getting closer to understanding the basic mechanisms of this syndrome. A supported hypothesis for a cause is a change in the dysregulation of neuroendocrines and neurotransmitters, which leads to heightened sensory processing of pain.

There are 18 tender points associated with diagnosing fibromyalgia. They are:

Anterior (from head to foot):

- Low cervical
- Second rib
- Lateral epicondyle
- Knee

Posterior (from head to foot):

- Occiput
- Trapezius
- Supraspinatus
- Gluteal
- Greater trochanter

In order to be diagnosed with fibromyalgia, a patient must exhibit tenderness or pain in 11 of the 18 areas when pressure is applied, or experience pain in all four quadrants of the body for at least three months.

Treatments for fibromyalgia include both conventional and alternative treatments. More conventional intervention involves obtaining medications to assist with pain management. Pregabalin was the first pharmacological treatment to be approved by the FDA. Non-narcotic pain relievers, low doses of antidepressants or benzodiazepines are other drugs that can be prescribed. Other treatments improve function and quality of life such as sleep management, psychological support, nutrition, and relaxation techniques, as well as exercise.

Expert on Fibromyalgia? DSES is always looking for volunteers to teach or give presentations!

Resources and Additional Information:

National Fibromyalgia Association; www.fmaware.org

The Fibromyalgia Resource Page; www.chiropractorratings.com/articles/fibromyalgia-resources.html

