PAIN: IMPROVING OUTCOMES USING PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS

Experts underline the importance of psychosocial interventions for managing pain at the 14th World Congress on Pain organized by the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) in Milan, Italy this week. Prof. Francis Keefe, Duke University Medical Center USA, delivered the John D. Loeser Distinguished Lecture on research and psychosocial treatment of pain.

Milan, August 30, 2012 – Minimizing pain in the elderly is one of the challenges faced by clinicians who treat pain. More than 7,800 pain experts are gathered for the world’s largest congress on pain management and research to hear the latest developments in the field. The tendency to focus on pain and negatively evaluate one’s ability to deal with pain has emerged as one of the most important predictors of pain, accounting for 7% to 31% of the variance in pain ratings. While there are now a variety of available psychosocial treatments that can help manage pain, these treatments are underutilized. The end result is that all patients, whatever their age, may be exposed to unnecessary suffering and pain.

“Patients can learn how to control and manage their own pain thanks to structured psychosocial approaches,” states Dr. Francis Keefe, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Psychology and Neuroscience, Anesthesiology and Medicine at Duke University Medical Center, USA, who delivered the John D. Loeser Distinguished Lecture on his studies about psychosocial treatment of pain. “Our goal is to act on psychological and social factors that negatively impact on pain such as stress, anxiety, work and family environment, socioeconomic situation, etc.,” he said. “Existing studies show benefits from cognitive, motivational and emotional pathways developed to help patients cope with their pain without catastrophizing about it.” His talk particularly focused on the elderly patient and their growing number of pain conditions.

The next step will involve health systems offering psychosocial approaches and interventions that could prevent persistent pain and pain-related disability. “Psychosocial approaches should be more effectively integrated into primary care settings,” explained Dr.

Keefe. “Some health systems are now incorporating behavioral specialists with expertise in pain management to consult with healthcare providers who regularly work with chronic pain patients.”

New frontiers for psychosocial interventions may be provided through the Internet and new information technologies that could help deliver psychosocial interventions on a large scale by offering phone support and online training. Possible applications are multiple and might include relaxation training, interactive consulting, motivational pathways to better understand the role that thoughts, feelings and behaviors can have on pain perception, as well as sessions dedicated to the maintenance of coping skills.

About the 14th World Congress on Pain

The world’s premier congress devoted to the research and treatment of pain is taking place in Milan, Italy from August 27-31, 2012. More than 7,800 pain researchers and clinicians from all over the world are attending this biennial event organized by the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP). The 2012 Congress features 13 plenary lectures, 2 distinguished lectures, and 69 topical workshops, as well as 19 refresher courses and 2,000 poster presentations.

About IASP

With more than 8,000 members from 128 nations, including basic scientists, physicians, dentists, psychologists, nurses, physical therapists, pharmacists, and other health professionals working in the pain field, IASP is the world’s largest, most international, and most multidisciplinary organization focused specifically on pain research and treatment. IASP is the most comprehensive resource for improving the knowledge and treatment of pain, and organizes a biennial Congress, produces PAIN, the leading journal in the field, and publishes books on the topic of pain. On the third Monday of each October, IASP launches a new Global Year to raise awareness of different aspects of pain. For more information, please visit www.iasp-pain.org/