CHALLENGING PAIN
PAIN SELF-MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME
BACKGROUND

Arthritis Care has been delivering successful self-management training courses since 1994.

In 1999 a government white paper Saving Lives: Our Healthier Nation endorsed self-management, mentioning Arthritis Care’s self-management course Challenging Arthritis as an example of good practice. Later, the government further promoted the benefits of self management by establishing the Expert Patient Programme.

Arthritis Care has established that arthritis is the most frequent cause of pain and pain is the main reason people visit their GP. Pain is the number one reason people with arthritis ring the Arthritis Care helpline and Arthritis Care’s Coping with Pain is the booklet most requested by callers to the helpline.

Recent research has highlighted a demand for a new self-management programme more focused on pain. Therefore building on the success of the 6-week Challenging Arthritis workshop, Arthritis Care working together with Dr Mark Taylor and Dr Sarah Andreae-Jones both specialists in pain management have developed and piloted ‘Challenging Pain.’

The aim of the pilot was to develop an effective and accessible intervention to complement the care and support people with pain receive from their health specialists. It is not a substitute for this support and care, but can be offered earlier where waiting lists are long.

The trial consisted of 18 workshops and 186 participants with chronic pain from the Plymouth and Devon area. All participants received a pre-programme questionnaire, a follow-up questionnaire at 6 months and a sample of participants took part in a one-hour focus group discussion.

The results from the research show successful psychosocial outcomes that are sustained and even improve over a six month period. For example, participants reported significantly improved ability to cope with their illness (up by 17 per cent), experienced reduced distress (average 15 per cent reduction), and needed to see doctors less often (average 17 per cent reduction in GP visits) in the six months after the programme, compared with the six months before the programme.

Comments (from participants who attended) suggested that they felt less fear about the future, and were continuing to use self-management techniques to control pain. They also reported improved communication with health professionals and family, being better at prioritising activities; having reduced stress, finding more time for themselves, and noticing increased self confidence.

Health professionals observing this new initiative said: ‘Challenging Pain is a good adjunct to treatment away from the hospital environment, and would be of benefit to patients and clients.’ Likewise, a GP who referred patients to the programme said: ‘My patients who attended the workshops have been impressed and found them very helpful.’
"I can now control my pain – I am not always on tablets."

"I was upset at being diagnosed but after attending the Challenging Pain workshops I feel more confident and able to deal with my condition much better."

"I now have a more balanced approach to my constant pain. I’m never free of pain but I am more able to manage it much better."

"This course changes your illness from something isolating and inhibiting to something you challenge."
DESCRIPTION OF THE CHALLENGING PAIN WORKSHOP

This workshop includes training sessions, which are similar to researched self-efficacy enhancing and cognitive symptom techniques, but with Challenging Pain the emphasis is not on condition self-management, but pain management. The Challenging Pain Manual and all supporting training and marketing materials are copyrighted to Arthritis Care.

Challenging Pain is delivered over two consecutive weeks in two-and-a-half-hour sessions.

The course can be delivered to disease specific or generic groups of 10 to 16 participants in chronic pain.

The course introduces participants to a variety of cognitive pain management techniques, and is designed to provide coping skills to enable them to manage pain and its impact on their lives more effectively.

Two lay trainers who have experience of living with long-term pain, and who have been trained under Arthritis Care’s established high quality assurance standards deliver the workshops.

The workshop sessions are designed to be interactive not didactic, and participants have the opportunity in a safe environment to try a variety of new pain management techniques.

Challenging Pain workshops are aimed at people with chronic pain and not chronic disease, and while beneficial to people with musculoskeletal pain they are potentially of value for people with a wider range of conditions. These could include:

- those with disease specific pain
- those with chronic back pain
- those with pain resulting from injury
- those waiting for hip/knee replacement surgery
- carers and significant others.

Participants are encouraged to gain the agreement of their health specialist, especially if they are trying new pain management techniques.

INTERESTED IN CHALLENGING PAIN?

Arthritis Care can deliver Challenging Pain directly to your beneficiaries throughout the UK or Arthritis Care can train your staff and/or volunteers to deliver the programme under license.

For further details on direct commissioning of course delivery or self-delivery under licence, please contact Training Services, Arthritis Care South England
Tel: 0844 888 2111. E-mail: SouthEngland@arthritiscare.org.uk