

Rehabilitation Station

Issue I ~ October –December 2005

A Note from the Program Director/Administrator:

I would like to take this moment to thank you and your treating Physicians for allowing Monarch Pain Care and Rehabilitation Center to be part of your recovery process. If you are receiving this newsletter, you most likely have completed one of our three multidisciplinary pain management programs. Our goal at Monarch is to continue assisting you, by providing continued information and education needed for your complete rehabilitation, even after your discharge from our facilities. In order to accomplish this goal, we have started this quarterly newsletter. This newsletter will assist you with the most up to date information regarding workers' comp, as well as information regarding physical and psychological well being. I truly hope you find this informative and helpful. We would love to hear from you and have feedback on this, our first quarterly newsletter. Again, thank you for allowing us to have the opportunity to serve you and your physician.

Dr. Ramiro Rivera
Monarch Pain Care and Rehabilitation Center
Program Director/Administrator



Coping Connection Dealing with Pain

Words to Meditate on: My Healing is Already in Process – My willingness to forgive begins my healing process. I allow the love from my own heart to me, cleansing and healing every part of my body. I know I am worth healing. – Louise L. Hay

A recent study from the The Journal of Pain, *Forgiveness and Chronic Low Back Pain: A Preliminary Study Examining the Relationship of Forgiveness to Pain, Anger and Psychological Distress*, shows that there may be a significant relationship between forgiveness and chronic low back pain. Many chronic pain patients have difficulty forgiving persons they perceive as having hurt or injured them. Anger and resentment toward others (spouse, health care provider, person who caused accident) are common features among persons experiencing chronic pain. However, it has been found that anger and resentment can complicate treatment. Forgiveness, on the other hand may alleviate these feelings of anger and resentment. Forgiveness is defined by the authors of the study, as the act of deliberately giving up anger felt toward offenders and fostering qualities of love, understanding, and compassion in their place. The inability to forgive may contribute significantly to his or her pain level. According to the authors of this study, patients who reported higher levels of forgiveness showed lower levels of pain. So, what is the benefit of holding on to feelings of anger and resentment? Long-term anger can lead to high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, lack of intimacy, and loss of social supports. The muscle tension that comes with feelings of anger can directly elevate the level of existing pain a person living with chronic pain already experiences. Whereas feelings of forgiveness can lead to feelings of love and compassion, as well as lowered stress which can lead

to lower level of pain. Making the decision to let go of these feelings of anger toward certain individuals or events is the first step.

References:

Carson, J., Keefe, F., Goli, F., Fras, A., Lynch, T., Thorp, S., Buechler, J: Forgiveness and Chronic Low Back Pain: A Preliminary Study Examining the Relationship of Forgiveness to Pain, Anger, and Psychological Distress. *The Journal of Pain*, February 2005. Vol. 6, #2 pg 84

Function Junction

Health and Well-being



Basic Stretching Guidelines

To help the body maintain the ability to perform normal activity there must be a proper amount of flexibility in the joints and muscles. Disease, trauma, or loss of motion in a joint can eventually cause shortening of the muscles, tendons, and joint capsule. For these reasons, stretching is an important part of rehabilitation. I find that it is best done lightly in the morning to maintain current flexibility levels and is also good for stress reduction and healthier living. Stretching can be done after exercise or activity. If you're looking to increase your flexibility and range of motion then a good stretching routine makes a good cool down after an intense workout when the muscle fibers are warm and more elastic. Avoid stretching "cold" because this could lead to tearing of the muscle fibers, which could lead to further injury. And also, don't bounce during a stretch.

Here some basic guidelines too remember:

1. First take the muscle to a gentle pull.
2. Hold the stretch for a short while (approximately 15-30 seconds). You may hold the stretch longer if desired.
3. When the feeling of tension decreases the stretch can be taken further.
4. Rest between stretches. Never try to gain too much range in one session and never stretch to the point of pain. It may take several weeks to see results, so be patient.
5. Relax and breathe regular during stretches. Inhale between stretches and exhale slowly with control while pulling muscles to whatever level you're comfortable with.

When stretching muscles, which cross two joints, first stretch over each joint separately, and then stretch both joints together. Keep in mind that gentle, longer stretches are generally more effective. For the best results your stretching routine should begin with the joints farthest away from the trunk first and work your way to the core of the body.

Though there are many benefits to stretching, there are conditions when it is contraindicated. For example when the joint has a bony block or there is a fracture present. Also when the muscle or joint is inflamed (the presence of heat or swelling) or the joint is excessively lax and the muscle is helping to keep the joint stable.

For any questions regarding your condition or specialized techniques, consult your healthcare professional.

What's new with Worker's Comp

The 79th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2005 enacted workers' compensation reform through House Bill 7, which was signed by Governor Rick Perry with provisions that will go into effect September 1, 2005. So what will this mean for you, the patient? As of September 1, 2005 the Texas Workers' Compensation Commission was abolished and its functions were transferred to the newly created Division of Workers' Compensation at the Texas Department of Insurance. The bill created a new state agency, the Office of Injured Employee

Counsel (OIEC). The OIEC will administer an ombudsman program and advocate on behalf of injured workers as a class during worker's compensation rulemaking. In addition, the OIEC will have staff attorneys to supervise and advise ombudsman during Division dispute resolution proceedings.

This bill also authorizes the certification of health care networks. If an employer chooses a network plan with the insurance carrier, workers who live within the network's service area are required to choose their treating doctor from a list of network providers. This is similar to the HMO concept used in-group health insurance. If an injured worker does not live within a network service area, they may choose a treating doctor from the Approved Doctors list. This list is maintained by the Division of Workers' Compensation. If an injured worker is not satisfied with their initial choice of treating physician, they are entitled to select another treating physician from the list of network doctors. This request cannot be denied, however, any subsequent requests to change treating doctors will be subject to network approval. An injured worker who is part of an HMO group health plan may select his or her primary care provider as their treating doctor if the HMO provider agrees to abide by all network terms and conditions.

House Bill 7 also raises the cap on weekly income benefits by 15%, for worker's compensation injuries occurring on or after October 1, 2006. Employees who are injured on or after September 1, 2005 will experience a reduced amount of time that they must be off of work in order to receive income benefits for the first week of disability, a decrease from four weeks to two weeks. Finally, in order to receive Supplemental Income Benefits, an injured worker must demonstrate that he or she is actively participating in a vocational rehabilitation program conducted by the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative or a private vocational rehabilitation provider; is actively participating in work search efforts conducted through the Texas Workforce Commission; or is actively looking for work as documented by the number of job applications submitted by the recipient as defined by the Division rule.

All of the above information regarding changes to the Texas Workers' Compensation Commission was obtained through the Texas Department of Insurance. For the most up to date changes and how they will affect you, the injured person, please visit <http://www.tdi.state.tx.us>. Monarch Pain Care and Rehabilitation Center is also committed to keeping you informed on the latest information concerning worker's compensation laws.

We hope you enjoyed our first quarterly newsletter. Thank you for allowing us to continue to serve you. We would love to share your story in our next issue of Rehabilitation Station. Please contact our clinic and let us know how you're doing, so that we can share your success with fellow patients, employees and their physicians.

Thank you,

The multi-disciplinary team at Monarch Pain Care and Rehabilitation Center

Our mission is to provide coordinated interdisciplinary services designed to improve the functioning of patients dealing with pain through rehabilitation.