



(How can Medicare and Medicaid payment incentives be used to promote evidence-based care for beneficiaries with chronic pain that minimizes the risk of developing OUD or other SUDs? What barriers to non-pharmaceutical therapies for chronic pain currently exist in Medicare and Medicaid? How can those barriers be addressed to increase utilization of those non-pharmaceutical therapies when clinically appropriate?)

To aid in this crisis and address the first two questions of concern, it is important to recognize one major barrier is lack of awareness of, and access to, non-pharmacological pain management interventions. Evidence based guidelines support cognitive behavioral pain control techniques as one of, and in some cases the best intervention for controlling pain and increasing function (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality “Noninvasive, Nonpharmacological Treatment for Chronic Pain, a Systematic Review,” American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, MDGuidelines, Colorado Division of Workers’ Chronic Pain Disorder Medical Treatment Guidelines). However there is a shortage of behavioral health providers with the training to treat all the patients who can benefit from these services.

Because these interventions are skill based, and self-administered once learned, besides face-to-face treatment, these pain control skills lend themselves to self-management approaches. A unique application for use on smart phones and personal computers has been developed that will aid individuals in both chronic pain and acute to gain self-management techniques to control their pain while reducing the need for opioids or avoiding them altogether.

This application provides to those using it a broad base of knowledge along with skills and techniques for managing pain. It is based in the *Biopsychosocial Model*, supported by International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP). This is the most widely accepted model for understanding pain. It goes beyond simple biomechanical approaches, which have limited utility in complex conditions such as pain. The biopsychosocial model takes into account that the manifestation and treatment of complex conditions such as pain must take into account psychological, interpersonal, and social influences on the medical condition and patient behavior. The IASP defines pain as: “An unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage or described in terms of such damage...it is unquestionably a sensation in a part or parts of the body, but it is also always unpleasant and therefore also an emotional experience.” As pain progresses from acute to chronic, changes in brain function occurs, with emotion centers becoming increasingly activated over purely sensory center. Thus, attitudes, beliefs, emotional reactions, and family/societal factors all influence pain perception and manifestation.

This app provides the patient with standard *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy* techniques to increase the patients' understanding and control of pain while increasing daily functioning. Education on the types and causes of pain, uses and risks of opiates, biopsychosocial influences on pain, and alternatives to medication are provided. The app provides education and training on behavioral relaxation/pain control, changing negative or fearful thoughts about pain, activity goal setting with scheduling and pacing activity, nutrition, and sleep management. The app has the ability to monitor an individual's patterns via self-reporting and connected devices, providing reporting to physicians or other health care members. The app provides a vital communication link to support coaches who can assist in real-time when needed. This is an important interaction between individuals that has been lost within our healthcare system when dealing with longer-term pain and opioid problems. It provides a link when necessary to higher levels of mental and physical healthcare should the need present itself.

This is just a very brief introduction to a very powerful new tool available to pain patients who need assistance with opioid use or as a preventive tool to avoid opioids. We look forward to discussing the benefits of this application in greater detail.

Most Sincerely,  
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