

Tell Me Where It **HURTS**

New Medications Provide Non-Narcotic Relief of Pain

In the wake of news reports detailing the potential dangers of certain non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), many individuals who rely upon these medications to help control chronic pain have new concerns about their health.

"Many patients who decided to stop taking these medications became concerned that they would not have any alternative for managing their pain," noted **Nolan Tzou, MD**, Medical Director of Huntington Hospital's Center for Pain Management. Dr. Tzou has reassuring news for those individuals,

"Promising new medications are coming on the market all the time," he pointed out,

Huntington's Center for Pain Management is at the forefront of bringing newly developed pain medicines to patients who need them. This includes both those medicines that have recently received FDA approval, and those that are still undergoing the final stages of clinical testing.

Bruce Cooper, who suffered from chronic back and neck pain following two automobile accidents and six surgeries, found significant relief from his pain through a medication that was still undergoing clinical trial.



Huntington 7s Pain Center was one of a number of institutions around the country collecting data on the effectiveness of zyconatide, a non-narcotic pain reliever that recently received final FDA approval.

During the study phase, Dr. Tzou treated 12 patients with zyconatide.

The medication is delivered directly to the spine through a device called an intrathecal pump which is surgically implanted under the skin in the abdomen. Because the medicine goes straight into the spinal canal and does not circulate throughout the bloodstream, there is a reduced risk of side effects.

Prior to being enrolled in the study, Mr. Cooper was taking oxycontin to relieve his severe back pain.

"I wanted to try to get away from heavy drugs because they were impairing my life," Mr. Cooper recalled.

During the period of time that he was a study participant, Mr. Cooper received the medication free of charge. Best of all, he found significant relief of his pain.

"Seventy percent of my pain is gone because of this," he stated. "That's pretty good, especially since I experienced no side effects at all."

Dr. Tzou emphasized that successful pain treatment often requires a trial and error approach.

"The pain population can be difficult to treat because what works for one patient may be ineffective for another," Dr. Tzou said. "Overall, the results with this medication appear to be similar to those with morphine, except that it is a non-narcotic and non-addicting."

Dr. Tzou noted that zyconatide is just one in an arsenal of available pain medications. He suggests that individuals who are concerned about the continued use of NSAIDs speak with their physicians about the risks versus benefits.

"Unfortunately, there is the risk of increasing blood pressure, and therefore increasing the risk of heart attack and stroke with all anti-inflammatory medications," Dr. Tzou said. "Before taking any medication, it is important to understand and weigh the risk against the potential benefit."