



Group Medicare Insights: Member Experience

The importance of a whole-body approach to pain management

It's known as the “silent epidemic”—more than one-third (36%) of Americans aged 65 and older experience chronic pain.

Yet often only the physical symptoms associated with pain are treated. Humana is helping to fill this gap in care by addressing not only the physical, but also the emotional, social and psychological elements of pain.

In this Q&A with Nicole Hemmenway, CEO of the U.S. Pain Foundation, we'll discuss how a whole-body approach to pain management can make a meaningful difference in a member's overall well-being.



Q Why is it important to consider the mental health aspects of pain in older adults?

Hemmenway:

Chronic pain affects far more than the body. It can disrupt sleep, relationships, independence, mood and overall quality of life. For many older adults, pain can also lead to feelings of isolation, stress, anxiety or depression, especially if it limits the activities they enjoy or their ability to connect with others.

Addressing mental health is not about questioning someone's pain. It's about recognizing that chronic pain impacts the whole person. When emotional well-being is acknowledged alongside physical symptoms, people are better supported and often better equipped to manage the challenges of living with pain.

Q How can emotional support, such as counseling, improve pain management outcomes?

Hemmenway:

Pain management is rarely one-size-fits-all, as there is no single solution for chronic pain. The most effective approaches often combine medical care with movement, education, emotional support, self-management strategies and community resources. Acknowledging emotional support as a key aspect of pain management can help validate and address the all-encompassing scope of the pain experience. When emotional health is treated as an essential part of pain management, people are often better able to participate in their care and maintain a higher quality of life.

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Q What role can social engagement play in managing pain?

Hemmenway: One of the things we hear most often from people living with chronic pain is that they feel alone. Pain can be incredibly isolating. Social connection can make a meaningful difference—whether it's spending time with family and friends, participating in community activities or joining a peer support group. Feeling understood and connected can improve emotional well-being and help people navigate the daily challenges of chronic pain.

Peer support is especially powerful because it connects people with others who truly understand what they're experiencing.

Q How can a Group Medicare Advantage plan help older adults manage their chronic pain?

Hemmenway: Access to comprehensive care is one of the biggest challenges for people living with chronic pain. Health plans can play an important role by helping individuals access multidisciplinary care, behavioral health services, physical activity programs, medication management and community-based resources. Chronic pain is a complex disease that affects every aspect of a person's life—not just their physical health. When health plans support whole-person care, they help individuals address the physical, emotional and social impacts of pain. Having such coverage allows individuals to engage with a broad range of treatments and resources, improves health outcomes and helps them live meaningful lives despite pain.

A snapshot of Humana's whole-body approach to pain management



Medication Therapy Management:

Helps members gain a better understanding of their medications, including safety and efficacy.

The upside: Members feel more empowered and in control of their pain management journey.



Personal health coaches:

Guide members to make healthy changes in their nutrition and fitness regimens.

The upside: Healthy habits can lower stress levels and enhance mental stability.



Humana Care Management teams:

Provide support for patients by listening to their concerns and connecting them to community resources, such as in-network behavioral health practitioners.

The upside: A dedicated team of caring people can help to reduce feelings of isolation and provide access to social and emotional support aids.

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