

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

# ORGANIZATION AND CLINICAL EXPERIENCE OF THE PAIN CLINIC AT THE GREATPOLAND MARIA SKŁODOWSKA-CURIE CANCER CENTRE IN POZNAŃ

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The Pain Clinic was established in 1987 thanks to the initiative of the hospital authorities realizing the need for the existence of an institution of this kind.

There has been increase in social demand for services rendered by pain clinics in Poland and over the world. The statistics quoted below prove the point very clearly. Treatment of cancer-related pain in hospitals is not sufficient. The number of pain clinics as well as the number of physicians trained in treating cancer-related pain is still unsatisfactory in our country, although the situation has improved greatly in recent years.

Our clinic operates according to the general rules in force in the Polish national health service, i.e. all patients treated in the national health scheme at the Greatpoland Cancer Centre or those with cancer-related pain sent referred from other clinics are entitled to free treatment the Centre. The Clinic belongs to the Intensive Care and Anaesthesiology Ward.

For all these years the Clinic has employed one anaesthesiologist and one nurse. The doctor – an oncologist - becomes a consultant in further treatment. We also consult psychologists employed at the Greatpoland Cancer Centre.

The role of the Clinic is not limited to pharmacological treatment or techniques only. The treatment of patients with a chronic pain causes disintegration of personality. It requires deeper involvement on the part of the doctor, including an intrusion into the patient's private life. By talking to the patients the doctor can estimate social and psychological effects of pain.

The localization of the Pain Clinic at the Cancer Centre with the possibility of multi-specialist consultations enables us to exchange observations on the patient, to choose proper treatment and to decrease the pain.

Analgetic procedures in treating cancer-related pain are those established by the WHO in attempt to bring relief to the suffering.

However, various data suggest different results of treatment. According to some sources 80%-90% of patients are relieved of pain, while others state that 1%-30% are not affected. The rule which we apply in treating patients with chronic cancer-related pain is a combination of a several methods (very rarely only one is used). Pharmacotherapy combined with blockades, pharmacotherapy with blockades and TENS, and pharmacotherapy with blockades and acupuncture are most commonly employed.

In the analysis of the effectiveness of pain treatment we estimate pain intensity according to VAS from 0-10 with the average of 5,0.

Most commonly used analgesics are:

NSAID - 78%  
mild opioids - 42%  
strong opioids - 15%

Pain treatment in oncology should not be limited to the terminal phase of the disease. It must be applied whenever symptoms occur.

Usually the pain appearing in the phase of diagnosis and active cancer treatment is thought to be less important than other complicated medical procedures etc. As a consequence the pain is treated incorrectly or there is no pain treatment at all.

The increasing activity of the Pain Clinic is the best proof of its usefulness and strengthens the cooperation between oncologists and anaesthesiologists. We hope that the growing awareness of cooperating specialists will help to avoid mistakes in pain treatment, and consequently this kind of treatment will not be restricted only to the terminal phase of the disease.

Methods of treating pain syndromes at the Pain Clinic at the Greatpoland Cancer Centre

Pharmacotherapy	90.0%
Nervous system blockades	12%
TENS	19%
Acupuncture	3%

Activity of at the Pain Clinic, Greatpoland Cancer Centre, Poznań.

YEARS	OVERALL	OUTPATIENTS	CONSULTATIONS
1987	171	151	20
1988	856	800	56
1989	1125	995	130
1990	1313	1010	303
1991	2592	2092	500
1992	2126	1958	168
1993	2570	2200	370
1994	2715	2358	357
1995	3210	2682	528
1996	2886	2561	325