

» CHRONIC PAIN

Ambassadors for collaboration

Experts from around the province
embody spirit of teamwork

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AHS Communications

Long before there was an Alberta Health Services, a group of people from across the province worked as one to help those with chronic back pain.

The Alberta HTA Chronic Pain Ambassador Project started in 2004 and puts best evidence into practice in all areas of the province.

"We thought, 'Let's create Alberta guidelines that would be useful around the province,'" says Dr. Paul Taenzer, pain specialist at the Calgary Pain Centre.

"Chronic pain is a prevalent problem with a lot of disability. From our perspective, if the services in rural areas improve, that's a bonus to patients because they don't have to come to Calgary or Edmonton. Their primary care providers in, for example, Trochu or High Level, will have the knowledge to handle most problems locally."

Experts from the Calgary Chronic Pain Centre, the University of Alberta Pain Centre in Edmonton and the former Chinook Health Region identified primary care interventions used in the province for the management of chronic low-back pain and conducted workshops for primary care providers describing the research evidence supporting the use of those interventions.

Workshops were run in eight of the nine former provincial health regions and more than 130 nurses, physicians, physiotherapists, pharmacists and administrators attended.

From those workshops, the decision was made to draft clinical practice guidelines for back pain.

"We never conceived anything other than a provincial strategy. There are no regional rivalries in the chronic pain community," says Taenzer.

"We are all colleagues."

The collaboration was initiated and funded by Alberta Health and Wellness, through the Health Technology Assessment (HTA) program.

The program now involves 14 partners, including Towards Optimized Practice (TOP); medical associations and colleges; universities; research funding bodies and institutes, and a patient advocacy group.

The Alberta guidelines for back pain have attracted the interest of the Canadian Medical Association, which has recently asked to list them in its database for use across the country. They are online at

www.topalbertadoc-tors.org/cpgs/back_pain.html.

Christa Harstall, Director of HTA for the Institute of Health Economics in Edmonton, says the longevity of the project has contributed to its success.

"We've developed long-lasting relationships," she says.

"Bridging the worlds of clinicians, government and re-

searchers by building trust, confidence and respect for each other's expertise and an understanding of each other's worlds has been an incredible experience."

Harstall says developing the guidelines that span from prevention through to chronic low back pain proved a bonding experience.

"What I found so amazing was how engaged people became," she says.

The provincial group is gearing up to get back to work this summer to develop headache guidelines, Taenzer says.

"How often can you get a group of people in health care — many of whom are senior and have been through all the bumps and bruises — excited about something and ready to do it again?" says Taenzer.

"It doesn't happen often."

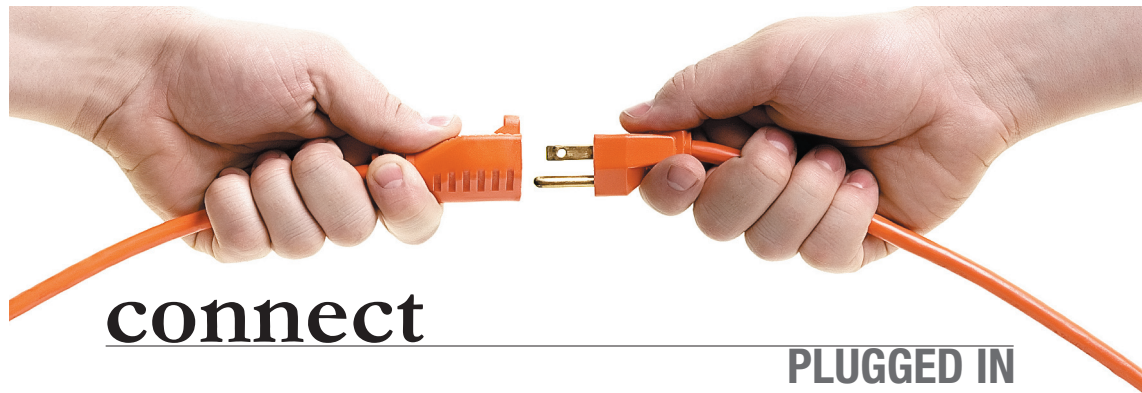
Visit www.ihe.ca/research/ambassador-program. ■



TAENZER



HARSTALL



Plugged In is Connect's free listings service designed to keep AHS staff and physicians informed about upcoming events. Have a submission? Send your listing to ahsconnect@albertahealthservices.ca no later than the 10th of the month for the following month's issue. Include your name, title and work contact information. Listings might be edited for brevity. Connect reserves the right not to run every item submitted.

» CALGARY

June 9-11 — Healing and Treating Addiction Problems workshop, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Executive Royal Inn Hotel, 2828 23 St. N.E. Phone 1-800-456-5424 to register. Cost: \$385-\$470, depending on group size.

June 10 — Discover which foods can boost your levels of anti-inflammatory compounds, help reduce inflammation and decrease your risk for disease at Women's Health Centre from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Cost: \$35. Call 403-944-2260 to register.

June 11 — The 18th annual Interdisciplinary Conference will be held from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Deerfoot Inn and Casino, 1000, 11500 35 St. S.E. Target audience is physicians, managers, educators, clinicians, fitness instructors, kinesiologists, researchers and program developers with an interest in the older adult. Cost: \$75. Registration deadline: June 5. Contact Jannet Shimmel at 403-292-9330. Details at www.shadesofgrey.ca

June 11-July 23 — Row Your Own Boat is a free, six-week workshop in which participants learn the skills to better manage living with an ongoing health condition or caring for someone with a chronic condition. Spouses and support persons or caregivers welcome. Runs Thursdays from 1 to 3:30 p.m. at Westwinds Superstore, #100, 3633 Westwinds Dr. N.E. To register, call 403-9-HEALTH (403-943-2584).

June 13 — Learn about different options for managing menopausal symptoms at the Women's Health Centre from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Bring your lunch. Tickets \$75, or \$85 within seven days of the event. Call 403-944-2260 to register.

June 16 — Find out more about osteoporosis and learn how you can reduce your risk factors and protect your bones. Treatment options will be discussed. Workshop at the Women's Health Centre from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Tickets \$25, or \$35 within 7 days of event. Call 403-944-2260 to register.

June 17 — Learn safe and effective ways to lose weight and keep it off from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the Women's Health Centre. Tickets \$25, or \$35 within 7 days of event. Call 403-944-2260 to register.

June 27-28 — The Ride to Conquer Cancer is a two-day cycling journey. Funds raised will be used for research of prevention strategies and more effective treatment options. To participate as a cyclist or volunteer, phone 1-888-624-(BIKE) 2453.

» CENTRAL

June 24 — 2nd Step: Computers and File Management. Learn to get the most out of the computer and the Windows environment; understand file management. Prerequisites: 1st Look at Computer or permission from the facilitator. At Ponoka's Centennial Centre for Mental Health and Brain Injury, Mat Man Room #1, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Register by June 10 by phoning 1-888-343-4553.

June 25, 26 — Mental Health First Aid Canada. Mental health first aid is tailored specifically to providing help to those experiencing mental health problems before professional help is obtained. Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre (SCL 503/504), 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Register by June 20 by phoning 1-888-343-4553.

» EDMONTON

June 5 — Advances in middle ear analysis techniques in newborns, children and adults, Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital, Conference Room A, from 8:14 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. Call 780-735-7912 or 877-877-8714.

June 10-12 — The Greying Nation: Keeping Ahead of the Wave, with keynote address by Dr. David Suzuki, at the Shaw Conference Centre. Call 780-735-7912 or 877-877-8714.

June 11 — Concurrent Disorders Series: Overview of problem gambling in Alberta by Richard Wallington, 9:30 to 11 a.m., Edmonton General Continuing Care Centre, 11111 Jasper Ave N.W. To register,

call 780-342-8800. This event is also available via Telehealth; call 403-783-7736 for more information.

June 16 — Health and Safety of Rural Drinking Water and the Security of Supply, featuring Karen Emde, Senior Advisor, Water Quality-Environmental Public Health, AHS-Edmonton area, at Plaza 124 at 9:30 a.m. Contact Lisa Weiss 780-342-0121 or lisa.weiss@capitalhealth.ca

June 18-19 — Dancing or Wrestling? Key Strategies in Enhancing Motivation for Change by Dr. Marilyn Herie. This workshop examines motivation as an interactive process between client and therapist, providing a variety of practice tools to address key issues in behaviour change. From 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Lister Centre, University of Alberta. Registration closes June 11. Register by phone at 403-220-2160. Cost: \$285.

June 19-20 — The Present and Future of Neurologic and Geriatric Rehabilitation: Practical Applications for Rehabilitation Practitioners, Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital, Dr. Bill Black Auditorium, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Call 780-735-7912 or 877-877-8714.

» NORTH

June 22-26 — Diversity Day activities. Celebrate the cultural diversity of our workforce. Events feature booths, samples of ethnic food and prizes for best cultural dress. Peace River Community Health Centre (June 22); High Prairie Health Complex (June 23); QEII Hospital, Grande Prairie (June 24); Grande Cache Community Health Complex (June 25) and Valleyview Health Centre (June 26). Activities take place from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at each site.

» SOUTH

June 10 — Living Healthy program presentation to mark Seniors Month and Stroke Prevention Month through Wellness Wednesday at Veiner Centre, including presentations and displays from other agencies. Event runs 9:45 a.m. to noon at 225 Woodman Avenue S.E. in Medicine Hat. Phone 403-529-8383 for details.