

Minor injury, minor pain? Serious injury, serious pain? Not necessarily the case...

To suggest topics, please call Angela Veri, National Director of Customer Relations.

November/December 2011

The Biopsychosocial Model of pain—now widely accepted as the ‘gold standard’ as the foundation for how to most effectively assess and treat chronic pain—helps us understand the complex nature of pain. It reveals that there is *not* necessarily a direct correlation between the severity of the injury and degree of pain experienced by your client. Essentially, the Biopsychosocial Model indicates that pain does not follow a clear cut, linear path—that a client with a minor injury doesn’t automatically experience a small degree of pain and in turn, a client with a serious injury doesn’t automatically experience a large degree of pain.

What exactly is the Biopsychosocial Model of Pain?

As its name implies— with “bio” and “psycho” and “social” —the Biopsychosocial Model takes into consideration the complex nature of pain by addressing the many components related to how we experience pain:

- Bio: refers to how the physical (biological) outcomes of the MVA cause pain (e.g., pain from a muscle tear or pressure on nerve endings due to swelling)
- Psycho: refers to how your MVA client feels about the situation (e.g., what is the client’s perception of pain in comparison to others? Has the client experienced similar pain in the past?)
- Social: refer to how your MVA client’s life situation is affected (e.g., what is the impact of pain on the client’s interpersonal relationships with their spouse and co-workers?)

Avoid the negative ‘cycle of pain’

The Biopsychosocial Model is especially relevant in providing guidance on how to help your clients avoid what is often referred to as the negative ‘cycle of pain’. This occurs when chronic pain triggers a downward spiral of both physical and emotional deterioration. For instance, although initially your client feels pain due to the MVA injuries, this leads to an emotional reaction of worrying about experiencing more pain. Worrying continues leading to anxiety about what the future holds, as well as feelings of helplessness, dependency, guilt, anger, and frustration. As a result, your client gradually begins to withdraw, stopping activities and becoming increasingly inactive. Inactivity leads to continued deterioration that leads to more inactivity creating a negative ‘cycle of pain’.

How the Biopsychosocial Model helps your client

With a solid understanding of the nature of pain, you can take a proactive approach to helping your client avoid the negative ‘cycle of pain’. Please see the attachment for types of Medical Assessors that may be appropriate depending on your client’s specific situation to assess their “biological” and “psychological” and “social” condition.

With chronic pain a range of medical assessors can help

Depending on your client's specific situation, a combination of the following medical assessors may be appropriate to help assess chronic pain:

Physiatrist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physician specialized in non-surgical management and treatment of injuries and diseases of the musculoskeletal and neuromuscular system (spinal cord injuries, acquired brain injuries, and soft tissue injuries.)
Psychologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ph.D. in Psychology and certified to assess using a battery of psychological tests, diagnose and treat behavioural, emotional and psychological disorders, excluding medication prescription. Psychologists help people to overcome or manage their problems using a variety of treatments or psychotherapies. The Psychologist often plays an important role in identifying pre-existing psychological issues that may impact the rehabilitation process.
Physiotherapist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trained to assess the underlying causes of joint, muscle, and nerve injuries and provide treatment to restore function or, in the case of permanent injury, to reduce the impact of dysfunction. To accomplish this, typically a physiotherapist will prescribe exercises and physical activities aimed at conditioning muscles and improving activity level.
Chiropractor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trained in the interrelationship between the musculoskeletal structure and function of the body like the interrelation between the spinal column and nervous system. For example, a Chiropractor may treat back pain, neck pain, and headaches by providing treatment to the spinal column through manipulation techniques.

For more information, please contact Sibley at 1-800-363-8900