22 July 2016

You look good, but how do you feel?

It’s your body and if you’re in pain, it’s your pain; whether it is visible to others or not.

National Pain Week (25 – 31 July 2016) puts the spotlight on pain, which can be an invisible experience for those people living with it.

One in five Australians lives with persistent pain, and Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service is helping local residents help themselves to manage their condition.

The Sunshine Coast Persistent Pain Management Service (PPMS) aims to support people living with complex persistent pain to manage their pain in collaboration with their general practitioner (G.P.).

Team Leader, Ms Huong Nguyen said the service taught those suffering with persistent pain that they could be in charge of their pain and live active lives by learning how to manage their condition.

“Persistent pain, also known as chronic pain, is a serious and complex health condition,” Ms Nguyen said.

“Pain is a protective response in all humans and normally alerts us if we have suffered actual harm or damage to our body, as in acute pain.

“When anything dangerous has been ruled out, the body has healed (as much as it can after serious injury) and/or no physical causes have been identified yet the pain persists for months or years, the persistent pain response we now know is more likely to be due to an array of multiple factors,” she said.

“Everyone’s experience of pain is different. It is your body and your pain. Helping you to understand your pain can be the key to learning how to manage it.

This can bring a sense of empowerment, of being in control, improved physical functioning, improved coping skills, and improved confidence in living life with pain.”

There are many active patients (young and old) who use the service, through multiple pathways which reflect the complexity and self-management approach to the management of persistent pain.

The PPMS clinical team includes psychologists, a physiotherapist, occupational therapists, an allied health assistant, a clinical nurse consultant and pain medicine specialist doctors.

Ms Nguyen said because the contributors of persistent pain were multi-faceted, so too were the treatments required.
“Approaches used to relieve and help with pain include education - understanding how pain works is key. Active strategies like gentle exercise for conditioning, maintaining independence in daily activities for function, and increasing ways to reduce stress for coping are also helpful,” she said.

Anyone living with persistent pain who would like to learn how to better manage their condition is eligible to receive a service at the PPMS; all you need is a referral by your G.P.

For more information about the Sunshine Coast Persistent Pain Management Service:
- Call 5470 6785 or 5370 3577
- Email SC-persistentpain@health.qld.gov.au

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