

## Normalizing fibromyalgia as a chronic illness.

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### Abstract

Fibromyalgia (FM) is a complex chronic disease that affects 3-10% of the general adult population and is principally characterized by widespread pain, and is often associated with disrupted sleep, fatigue, and comorbidities, among other symptoms. There are many gaps in our knowledge of FM, such that, compared with other chronic illnesses including diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, and asthma, it is far behind in terms of provider understanding and therapeutic approaches. The experience that healthcare professionals (HCPs) historically gained in developing approaches to manage and treat patients with these chronic illnesses may help show how they can address similar problems in patients with FM. In this review, we examine some of the issues around the management and treatment of FM, and discuss how HCPs can implement appropriate strategies for the benefit of patients with FM. These issues include understanding that FM is a legitimate condition, the benefits of prompt diagnosis, use of non-drug and pharmacotherapies, patient and HCP education, watchful waiting, and assessing patients by FM domain so as not to focus exclusively on one symptom to the detriment of others. Developing successful approaches is of particular importance for HCPs in the primary care setting who are in the ideal position to provide long-term care for patients with FM. In this way, FM may be normalized as a chronic illness to the benefit of both patients and HCPs.

### KEYWORDS:

Education; fibromyalgia; non-drug therapy; pharmacotherapy; symptom domain