

One simple click helps cut pain

A new website teaches ways to manage pain.



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HEALTH

GOING online is no longer a pain.

Chronic pain is a major threat to a person's quality of life, and it will become more so as the population ages. With this in mind, Hunter Integrated Pain Service (HIPS) has launched a new website.

It is part of the service's ongoing education to healthcare professionals and the community on how pain can be best managed.

The director of Hunter Integrated Pain Service, Dr Chris Hayes, said there was a high demand on the service provided by HIPS.

The website informs those suffering from persistent pain about effective management approaches.

"HIPS was established in 1997 and is a multidisciplinary pain management team now based at the Royal Newcastle Centre," Dr Hayes said.

"It aims to promote and deliver evidence-based, multidimensional care to those with acute, persistent and cancer pain."

The HIPS team had done a lot of work on making the service as accessible as possible for clients and ensuring it could meet future demand.

"In addition to community information, there's information targeted to a wide range of healthcare professionals involved in pain management and referring patients to our service," Dr Hayes said.

HIPS's approach to pain management had prompted much discussion between GPs in the Hunter New England Health area and the HIPS team.

"HIPS have developed a multi-faceted approach in collaboration with Hunter Urban Division of General Practice which includes GP education workshops and medical guidelines, a GP practice telephone contact and a patient screening questionnaire to assist GPs and patients with pain assessment," Dr Hayes said.

"The questionnaire has become a standard part of our referral process but can also be used



LOG ON: The director of Hunter Integrated Pain Service, Dr Chris Hayes, test-drives the new pain-information website.

independently by GPs as a multidimensional assessment tool."

Dr Hayes said most patients were now discharged from hospital after initial assessment, with a management plan in place for their GP to implement.

"When the patient returns home, they can log onto the community information section of the website, which provides a wealth of information about various aspects of persistent pain," he said.

"The intention is that the person can then discuss information of interest with family, friends or health carers as they consider changes in their approach to pain.

"The approach to persistent pain across the community is beginning to change, and we are very excited to

launch the new website. "It allows patients to gain access to relevant information about managing their pain, early into their diagnosis."

Dr Hayes said the presence of persistent pain encouraged people to review their lifestyle.

"Although we usually begin by thinking of the ways in which pain interferes with our lifestyle, there are also ways in which lifestyle can impact negatively on our pain. Developing a healthy lifestyle will improve overall quality of life and may also reduce the severity of persistent pain."

The Hunter Integrated Pain Service website can be found at: hnehealth.nsw.gov.au/pain