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## Substance Use Disorders and Alternative Options for Chronic Pain

Chronic low back pain is a condition that lasts, at minimum, twelve weeks or greater [1]. This condition is typically treated with a medication regimen that includes opioids, the most highly prescribed class of medications for chronic pain. The liberal use of opioids to relieve chronic pain has led to the abuse causing substance use disorders (SUD) to increase over the past few decades [2]. SUD is a disease affecting a person's brain and behavior. It is characterized by an individual's continuous use of a substance (alcohol, heroin, cocaine, benzodiazepines, etc.), thus increasing the risk for developing serious health problems [3,4]. Consequently, those individuals who have a history of SUD have unique challenges when dealing with chronic pain.

There is limited evidence in the literature that shows the benefit of treating chronic pain with only opioids [5]. A patient is more likely to manage pain successfully when alternative treatments are provided in conjunction with pain medications. However, there continues to be a lack of non-pharmacological treatments in reducing pain levels in the SUD population. Pain, especially low back pain, affects millions of people on a global scale. This chronic condition causes expenditures to increase to the billions and is the cause for upward of eighty – five percent of visits to primary care providers [6,7]. Some literature has shown that alternative methods assist SUD patients in managing the burden of experiencing chronic or low back pain, which can elicit a more sober lifestyle [5].

Pain, a chronic disease, has physical and emotional outcomes that can interfere with activities of daily living (SAMHSA, n.d.). It is one of the most common reasons patients seek medical care [8]. The prevalence, over the last decade, has doubled and is non-discriminatory affecting both males and females of any ethnicity or race [1,8]. The numbers of those living with pain are expected to increase and continue to place a burden on healthcare spending costs, loss of wages, and reduction of work productivity [1].

There is minimal evidence available to make a concise conclusion of how physical activity can assist in the improvement of chronic low back pain for the SUD population. Research that is available suggests a decrease in the cost of healthcare expenses when physical activity is used consistently in a population without a problem of addiction. Further research is recommended to explore the SUD populations, chronic pain, and their experience with a consistent physical activity regimen.

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