

# War Declared on Pain

By Joan M. Smith

Pain. It can debilitate physically and incapacitate mentally. There are millions of people who intermittently suffer, and millions more who constantly suffer. Pain can be a nagging headache, a distressing migraine, or a chronic arthritic pang, just to mention a few of its forms. Until the early 70s drugs were the only remedy.

In 1971, however, the ancient Chinese method of acupuncture surfaced in the United States and since then, alternative methods of treating pain have been recognized and studied.

Acupuncture, electronic nerve stimulation, biogenics and hypnosis will only be a few of the alternatives discussed at the Symposium on Other Concepts for Management of Pain from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 21, in Kearney Auditorium, St. John Fisher College.

The seminar, open to the public as well as to health professionals, is being sponsored by the Pre-Med Department of St. John Fisher and the Rochester Academy of Pain Management (RAPM). The latter is a new organization started for the purpose of bringing together those involved in health care

to exchange information in the study of research of pain control. Emil K. Litwin, DPM, podiatrist, serves as president of RAPM, and he recently discussed with the Courier-Journal some of the alternative treatments that will be on the seminar agenda.

Because pain is transmitted to the brain through the nerves, Dr. Litwin explained that the aim of the alternative treatments is to interrupt this message. Acupuncture does this by crosscutting the pain's trigger point (nerve center) with a needle. Overstimulating the nerve in this manner interferes with the message being sent the brain, thus relieving the pain.

Electronic medicine (needleless acupuncture), particularly Transcutaneous Electric Nerve Stimulation (TENS), is another method. This process, which Dr. Litwin sees as the medicine of tomorrow, interrupts the message through the use of electrical probes. According to the doctor, there are electrical fields in the body as well as around it that can be measured. In a healthy body these fields are balanced, but when an area becomes diseased this balance shifts with the ensuing pain. The electrical probes, connected to a computer, search out the imbalance and, upon finding it, treat the pain and then automatically cease treatment when the pain dissolves.

Pain can also be emotionally stimulated. It has been learned that stress causes backaches, aggravates ulcers, affects blood pressure, and triggers headaches. These psychological aspects of pain will be discussed by Dr.



Focus on Disabled

Timothy Stern, medical director of RAPM, and Father Charles Lavery, chancellor of St. John Fisher College, Biogenics and hypnosis for anxiety and stress will also be discussed by Nicholas L. Ferraio, MS.

Doctor Litwin agreed that these alternative methods only treat pain, they don't cure the cause, and because of personal and situation variables, they are not 100 percent effective. "But," he said, "even if they are 40 percent effective, it is good." He firmly believes that if one can manage pain one can manage the patient.

The Nov. 21 symposium is RAPM's way of informing the public about managing pain. As Robert B. Reynolds, executive director of RAPM, pointed out, "The classical methods of treatment are essential, needed, and can't be abandoned, but there are alternatives."



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### Sarah Child



All in the Family

### From the Mailbag

Dear Sarah:

I read with interest last week's column about the woman who suffered from anxiety and who was helped when she learned to pray for the gift of trust.

I can identify with her since that is pretty much what happened to me. I am in my late fifties now and ever since I was a very young child, my life was governed by fear of "what might happen." The possibilities were endless; my family might be involved in a car accident, our house might burn down, a desperate burglar would break into our house and harm us, etc., etc.

Not that some unpleasant things didn't happen in our lives, but nothing as bad as I imagined.

Praying didn't seem to help an awful lot — at least not in alleviating my fears. And the energy spent in needless worry was such a waste of my good years.

Things came to a head about 10 years ago when I had an opportunity to fly cross country to see a new grandchild. Needless to say, I was petrified that the plane would crash. I spent countless hours before the flight and several during it in extreme, if silent, panic.

Once there, my joy in seeing our son's new baby was colored by thoughts of the return trip I had to face. It was a Protestant friend of my daughter-in-law who said the magic words when somebody was teasing "mother" about her plane trip during the christening party.

"Pray," she said to me later, "but ask the Lord exactly for what you need."

### St. Boniface

The Men's Club of St. Boniface Church will gather Friday, Nov. 20, at the school hall. The fund raiser will feature an arts and crafts exhibit and food.

What I needed was TRUST. And in the words of a familiar commercial, I asked for it and I got it. To make a long story shorter, I actually slept on the plane ride home — according to my husband, with my mouth open!

It was the start of a new life for me and if I have any regrets it is only that it took me so long to find the answer. Do I still worry? Sometimes, but not like before. I'm sorry I rambled on for so long, but telling my story might help others. If you use my letter sign me

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