



Take Ownership of Your Ailments

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As a health care provider (HCP), patients come to me to receive treatment for a wide variety of injuries, impairments, and disabilities. Often times, full recovery takes only a few weeks of therapy. However, with more chronic cases, serious accidents and surgeries, the therapy may need to be extended over a period of 2 to 3 months or longer as the progress is likely to be slow and gradual. My primary objective is to maximize improvement in the shortest time possible.

Unfortunately, many patients are so focused on their pain and limitations that they become reliant on their HCP (e.g. PT, massage therapist, chiropractor, acupuncturist...) and pain medication. They continually seek to have regular ongoing appointments just to get a “quick fix” for a few hours to a couple days of relief with no overall improvement in their condition. Massages, ultrasound treatments, spinal mobilizations/adjustments and a variety of other modalities and alternative treatments may aid in the recovery process, but on their own will seldom cure your condition. Occasionally they do resolve the problem only to have the same problem come back time and again because the underlying cause was never addressed.

As a Physical Therapist, my goal with all of my patients is not to only pinpoint and treat the physical location of their symptoms. My ultimate goal is to determine the primary cause (e.g. trauma, repetitive overuse, biomechanical abnormalities, muscle imbalance...) as well as other contributing factors (e.g. poor body mechanics, poor posture, sleep position...) that led to the patient’s condition. From there, I aim to develop a treatment plan tailored to the individual patient often consisting of modalities, manual therapy, and appropriate exercises and stretches. To speed the recovery time even further, I educate the patient in a home exercise program (HEP) and give recommendations to resolve bad habits that may have contributed to their condition. Changing bad habits and regular HEP compliance are very important in not only speeding up recovery time, but also decreasing the likelihood that the patient’s symptoms will return.

If you have or develop problems that lead to your seeking medical intervention, there are certain steps you can take so that your trips to your HCP’s office for treatment do not become a revolving door with no end in sight.

- Do not wait months and months before seeking treatment. It is easier to treat and resolve problems before they become chronic.
- Follow your HCP’s recommendations and be compliant regularly with your HEP. Be sure to ask your HCP what you should be doing at home and if there is anything you should avoid.
- Seek a second opinion or consult a specialist if there is no overall improvement in 3-4 weeks and you have been compliant with your HEP. Do not expect to get much better if you do not routinely follow your HCP’s advice.
- Seek a second opinion if your HCP tells you that you will need ongoing treatment for several years or the rest of your life. This should be a major red flag.

Remember, you must actively participate in your therapy by doing your part at home. You will likely require medical intervention by your HCP, but much of your overall recovery and prevention of future recurrence is dependent on your active compliance with your home exercise program and changing bad habits that contributed to your condition.

