

Medical congress meeting in Miami Beach to target pain relief

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Forget the late, great comedian George Carlin's so-called "seven dirty words you can't say on television."

To me, the most objectionable four-letter term in the English language is p-a-i-n.

Good thing for all of us, then, that several thousand of the world's top pain-relief specialists are convening this weekend at the 6th World Congress - World Institute of Pain, which is being held at the Miami Beach Convention Center.

The goal of these men and women: to see how they can best advance their efforts to eliminate the "profanity" that is p-a-i-n from our daily lives.

Dr. Ira Fox, co-founder of Anesthesia Pain Care Consultants (which has a multitude of locations throughout Broward County), is head of the host committee for the event.

"This Congress, which is a biannual event that's been previously held all over the world, will be a true reflection of just how far the field of pain management has evolved," says Fox.

Indeed, the many symposiums (which the general public can also attend) will cover pain-relief treatments for those suffering from, among other things:

- Cancer pain
- Fibromyalgia
- Severe headaches
- Joint, muscle and myofascial pain
- Spinal and neck pain
- Neuropathic pain
- Arthritis

"What's great about this gathering is that we'll have the world's leading pain specialists talking about the different proven ways they've found to treat the same problem," Fox says.

In other words, the doctors will be sharing and cross-referencing their various approaches to solving similar conditions.

Fox is one of the local pioneers in the practice of interventional pain medicine. He and his partners incorporate a unique array of methods to manage, and often completely alleviate, all forms of pain.

"With our background in anesthesia, and additional specialized training in pain management, we're able to bridge the gap between minimally invasive, and non-invasive, techniques for relieving pain," Fox explains.

Fox is an expert in pinpointing the exact site, and likely cause, of chronic pain. He can then determine the best strategic spot to make a small injection in order to block the brain's pain "signals" from traveling through the spine.

Sometimes this means injecting at the exact site of the pain; at other times, it means injecting in a spot that's removed from the area that hurts - but is connected to the neural pathway.

"Either way, we want to provide immediate and long-lasting relief for chronic pain," he says. Fox says the field's three major oversight organizations - the World Institute of Pain, the World Society of Pain Clinicians and the European Federation of IASP Chapters - are coming together at this weekend's event.

"The leaders of each group are signing an official 'Declaration Against Pain,'" explains Fox. "They're pledging to pool their resources and knowledge to bring effective, affordable pain management to people all over the world."