

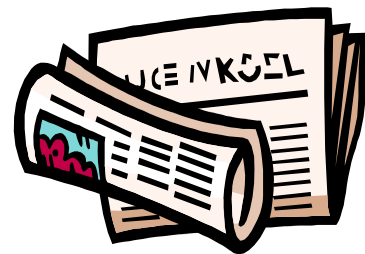


Valley Pain Specialists, PC

Consultants in Acute and Chronic Pain Management

Steven Mortazavi, M.D.
Teena Varghese, M.D.
Marissa Marion, PA-C
Ashley Zimmerman, PA-C

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Former Smokers Report Less Chronic Pain Than Current Smokers

A new study presented at the 2011 annual meeting of the American Society of Anesthesiologists found that current smokers had “significantly more intense and impairing pain, as well as more anxiety and depression” than nonsmokers. This study conducted statistical analyses using the 11-point Brief Pain Inventory and the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale. The results showed that smokers had “significantly higher average scores” than nonsmokers on all of the questionnaires.

It is known that smokers tend to have higher rates of mood disorders, and there is a close relationship between mood disorders and chronic pain. When smokers develop chronic pain, their symptoms and disability are often worse than nonsmokers.

The hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis is down-regulated in smokers which can reduce tolerance of pain and cause quicker perception of painful stimuli. In nonsmokers, pain perception is blunted when painful stimuli activate the sympathetic nervous system and the HPA system.

It is important to encourage smoking cessation for all patients to improve general health and wellbeing, but it is becoming more evident that smoking cessation may aid in the treatment of chronic pain as well.

Adapted from:
Anesthesiology News December 2011
Minnesota Medicine March 2011
Anesthesiology October 2010



For Information and Referrals:

(610) 954-9040

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