

connecting with PHYSICIANS

Pain relief at the source Morphine pumps deliver a respite from chronic pain

Playing with your grandchildren is almost impossible. Taking a walk might be out of the question, too. For your patients with chronic pain, loss of the little things in life can be the hardest to accept. That's when more drastic pain-management therapies might be the best choice.

Implantable morphine pumps are considered by most physicians as a last-resort therapy for treating chronic pain, but the results can be very effective. Composed of an intrathecal catheter and medication reservoir, the device injects either a narcotic like morphine or a strong anti-muscle-spasm medication like baclofen directly into the nervous system – specifically the area between the thin layers of tissue that surround the brain and spinal cord. The majority of patients with the device suffer from either terminal cancer or chronic back pain.

“Of course, careful discussion should take place before this therapy is used,” said Keith Neuenswander, DO, a pain-management specialist who performs the surgery at Liberty Hospital. “But I’ve seen some great results from this procedure. It’s nice to see patients with chronic pain finally get some relief.”

Most patients start with a trial pump kept outside the body to measure the effectiveness

of the therapy. If the patient shows at least a 50-percent reduction in pain, then surgery

can be scheduled to implant a permanent pump. As with any surgery, inherent risks of infection exist as do risks of pump malfunction, and the success of the device can decrease over time as the brain becomes resistant to the medication.

So while the therapy definitely isn't

an option for many patients, Neuenswander said, those with chronic pain that limits their daily activities can benefit greatly. “This is for those patients that are simply overwhelmed by their pain,” he said. “When these patients get little or no relief from more conservative therapies, they become candidates for this procedure.”

The pump can also be extremely beneficial for those terminal cancer patients in their final days of life. By eliminating the debilitating pain, the therapy allows these patients to take care of their affairs and enjoy time with their loved ones, with little or no side effects.

For more information about the implantable pump therapy – as well as other pain treatments – please call the Pain Management Center at Liberty Hospital at 816-407-2028. Same-day appointments are available.



Keith Neuenswander, DO