



# Understanding Chronic Pain (Understanding Health and Sickness Series)

*Ph.D. Angela J. Koestler, M.D. Ann Myers*

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Pain accounts for more than thirty-five million new office visits and more than seventy million of all office visits to physicians each year in the United States. Although there is no cure for chronic pain, *Understanding Chronic Pain* outlines new and effective treatments that focus on the management of pain and improvement in a patient's quality of life.

In the United States approximately ninety million people suffer from chronic pain, with an estimated cost exceeding \$125 billion annually in health care, disability compensation, lost productivity, and lost tax revenue.

To provide information about the mechanisms of such suffering and about current treatments, the authors of *Understanding Chronic Pain* have combined their experiences as teachers, physicians, and therapists. Their book is intended for those individuals burdened by chronic pain, as well as for their families, coworkers, employers, and friends.

Chronic pain disables more people than cancer or heart disease and costs more than both combined. It is estimated that five million Americans are partially disabled by back problems, and two million are so severely disabled that they cannot work. Twenty million people endure arthritis pain; forty million experience chronic recurrent headaches. The majority of individuals in intermediate or advanced stages of cancer suffer moderate to severe pain.

Only within the last two decades has there been a surge of interest in specifically addressing the issue of chronic pain and its relief through research and clinical application. Previously, it was believed that pain was necessarily associated with tissue damage. Pain that persisted past the normal time of healing was attributed to neurosis or hysteria.

Over the last twenty years our understanding of the underlying mechanisms of chronic pain has significantly increased. *Understanding Chronic Pain* treats these afflictions not as symptoms, but as a specific medical problem to be addressed with specific treatment methods and interventions. For many people with such chronic conditions as back pain and arthritis, the pain from the condition may interfere with the quality of their lives more than the actual disease or injury.

Angela J. Koestler is co-owner of the Nordal Clinic in Vicksburg, Mississippi, and is the director of Behavioral Health Services at the Methodist Rehabilitation Center in Jackson.

Ann Myers is clinical associate professor of medicine at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson and is also in private practice.

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