

Thursday May 2, 2013

## **I hear your pain: the art of communication in human suffering**

Language is a key source of exploring and understanding pain, and pain management can be adversely affected if there is a shortfall in accurate communication between doctor and patient, a meeting of pain experts will hear in Melbourne tomorrow, Friday May 3.

Professor Roland Sussex, a linguist from the University of Queensland will tell a gathering of experts from Australia, New Zealand and around the world that verbal communication is a critical tool in pain management and disease diagnosis and treatment.

Professor Sussex said that a sophisticated understanding of the way language expresses the intensity, nature and duration of pain could lead to enhanced interpretation of patients' pain and its implications.

"Patients need help to express their pain and equally importantly, doctors and therapists need to understand their patients' descriptions of pain," he said.

Scientific convenor Dr Michael Vagg said the [one-day Faculty of Pain Medicine meeting](#) at the Sofitel Melbourne would explore the diversity of communication issues in pain medicine, including patient consultation skills, health literacy and the pain medicine 'brand' in the wider culture of our community.

Other speakers include:

- **Professor Fabrizio Benedetti from the University of Turin** who investigates the neuroscience of the doctor-patient relationship and the role of placebos in pain management.
- **Dr Damien Finniss from Sydney's North Shore Hospital** who will tell the meeting that research on placebo effects has permitted a detailed exploration of the effects of the psychosocial context on the patient's mind, body and brain.
- **Tasmanian GP and medical educator Dr Frank Meumann**, who will discuss communication in the consulting room and ask - can working with difficult patients make better doctors?

Pain medicine is a multidisciplinary medical practice and a medical specialty in its own right, recognition of the importance of the problem of unrelieved pain in the community and the need for a comprehensive medical response through education, training and practice. The FPM meeting is a precursor to the five-day annual scientific meeting of the Australian and New Zealand College of Anesthetists (ANZCA) with the Faculty of Pain Medicine (FPM).

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