



Compassionate Care

New York Pain Management, PLLC
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The doctors at New York Pain Management are dedicated to restoring quality of life for all their patients.

Success Magazine: How do you define success?

Charles Gordon: In business, success is the ability to excel in all economic environments. In medicine, it's being equipped to care for all patients with compassion. So, for us, success lies in the ability to merge medicine with the business aspects—helping individuals achieve their goals in treatment, while progressing on the business end.

SM: You must get patients who have very complex issues. How do you deal with this?

CG: True, our patients are often very complex. Most of them have some other aspect of their psycho-social world that spills into their pain problem and vice-versa. Pain affects relationships. Our goal is to figure out what those psycho-social issues may be, address them, and outsource them so that we can focus on the pain. Many times people can't begin to heal physically until they are able to begin to recover from their depression, anxiety or past traumas in life.

SM: What is the main thrust of your practice?

CG: Interventional pain management.

SM: Do you specialize in one particular part of the body?

CG: Our predominant focus is on spine care—from the neck to the lower back. We have some patients with nerve injuries, nerve pain problems and joint disorders, but the predominant pathologies that we deal with are spine or nerve pain issues.

SM: What do you do to assuage the pain?

CG: We have a lengthy questionnaire to determine how their pain is affecting their life, how the injury occurred and what, if any, are the contributing medical or psychological issues. What imaging studies, MRIs, surgeries, or x-rays you may have had in the past. We collect reports from other physicians involved in an effort to collaborate the patient's care. Once that is established, we do an evaluation and figure out the pain generator. The process is complex because the pain is complex.

SM: How do you fix pre-existing injuries?

CG: Most of the time we can't just "fix it." We are a fix it society. Your appendix ruptures... they take it out. You have tonsil problems... they take them out. So, in the medical profession, we are used to this fix it philosophy. But, with chronic pain, we usually can't just fix it. We help patients cope with their pain by giving them information and resources. We may give them injections or medication management to help minimize the pain as much as possible.

SM: What is an example of a pain management resource?

CG: Exercise therapy, physical therapy, chiropractic care, acupuncture, massage therapy—a whole host of other remedies. We may council you on things to avoid. For example, we have a number of construction workers that come in here with herniated discs etc, and we make sure that they understand that their back is not necessarily going to get better, and they may need to work toward a position easier on their body. A change in lifestyle often helps alleviate some of the symptoms from reoccurring.

SM: What makes you unique to the field?

CG: We have a unique environment where we offer advanced pain care therapies in a relaxed setting. Here, people are removed from the chaos of other practices or hospital settings. Our staff are very well qualified. All physicians are board certified and our support staff are licensed nurses. We are one of the first office based surgery sites that is accredited for interventional pain management in New York State. We're equipped with all the newest technology. We were actually one of the first offices in the area to have an electronic medical record system.

SM: Do you ever pray with your patients?

CG: Sometimes we do. Sometimes I do. We will have patients who come in and ask us to pray before they go in for a procedure.

SM: What effect does this have?

CG: If someone comes in and asks you to pray with them and you say no,

it's going to put them on edge. But if you are compliant with their wishes, at the very worst it's benign and at the very best there may be higher powers involved in the healing. I believe in the power of prayer and I pray for my patients every day before I come to work.

SM: Where did you go to Medical School?

CG: Columbia University. It is a leader in medicine, both locally in the metropolitan New York community and internationally. As an undergrad at Brown University, I studied neuroscience and had an interest in pursuing training in neuroscience as a physician. Columbia University has a great neuroscience institute.

SM: So you knew back then that you were interested in neuroscience?

CG: Yes. I actually went through an old file cabinet a few years ago, pulling out items to throw away, and I found a file that contained the first paper I ever wrote at Brown—on pain pathways—what we do every day here.

SM: Why did you decide to go out on your own, branching away from anesthesiology and focusing more on pain management?

CG: It took years of thought and mentoring. A friend of my father was one of the forerunners of developing urgent care centers outside of hospital campuses back in the seventies in New Jersey. At that point, when we were thinking about pain management offices outside of a hospital setting, it was relatively unique. I visited many practices around the country, got advice from my father's friend, and realized that we had a vision for something that was feasible. Then I sat down with my wife, who is a doctor's worst nightmare—an RN with an MBA. We crunched the numbers and made it happen. She was very instrumental in determining if there was a need in the area, and if we could meet that need.

SM: Why did you choose the spinal care specialty?

CG: Back pain is probably the leading cause of work loss in the U.S. There is a huge population of patients who have a need. Traditionally, most pain related physicians were anesthesia based. That has evolved.

SM: What is the greatest achievement of your career?

CG: It's great to be able to get someone out of their wheelchair, and get them back to doing what they love to do.

SM: What's the best advice you've ever received?

CG: You are never as smart as you think you are.

SM: What personal characteristics have helped you become successful?

CG: A combination of compassion and persistence. Money and material goods only carry you so far, and they don't carry you where you want to be. Caring for patients and truly helping them will stay with you for a lifetime. You need to be persistent in your compassion to find success as a doctor.

SM: Dr. Phung, where did you complete your undergraduate and residency?

QP: I went to medical school in Syracuse, at Upstate Medical University. I did my residency in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and served as Chief Resident there as well. Immediately following, I completed a pain fellowship at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

SM: Why did you choose pain management?

QP: I think it is a very challenging and rewarding aspect of medicine. Every patient and situation is different, so you are always learning—it keeps you on your toes. Treating pain requires a multi-modal approach. You need to use all the tools you have in your arsenal.

SM: You are licensed in acupuncture as well?

QP: Yes. That's true. You have to be licensed to practice acupuncture in New York State. I think acupuncture certainly has its place. Many people have been in pain so long, they turn to acupuncture even though it isn't something they would normally think to utilize.

SM: What led you to this region?

QP: My wife, who is a physician as well, grew up in Guilderland and wanted to return to this area. We love it. People are wonderful here.

SM: What do you believe you will bring to this practice?

QP: I come from a different background and training. It's always good to have someone else to bounce ideas off and offer a different perspective. On a daily basis we discuss complex patients, and our differing view points allows us to better help our patients.

SM: What are your goals for your work here?

QP: To provide excellent pain care to all our patients, to treat them with respect, and help them maximize their goals and potential. Pain effects the quality of life. I want our patients to return to the quality of life they desire and deserve.

SM: How do you achieve balance in your life?

QP: You have to set your priorities. You must realize that you can't do everything, and then look inside yourself to see what you value and what's important. We all need to have things outside of our profession that make us happy. We need to prioritize and keep these aspects separate.

SM: Why did you choose medicine as a career?

QP: I was part of the early assurance program and was accepted to medical school in my sophomore year in college. I was actually a philosophy major, so going in I didn't bring that much of a science background. Medicine in general has a lot to do with people. I think the best doctors are the ones that can relate to people and see the human side of things. The medical industry has become so technical that we, so often, lose the human side.

SM: How do you find peace in your life?

QP: You just have to take things day-by-day. If you asked me this ten years ago, I wouldn't have thought I would be a doctor, let alone sitting here in Clifton Park. You take things day-by-day and do what you love—if you use that as your guide, I think everything will work out.

SM: What one word describes you best?

QP: Compassionate.

Liberate yourself from the constraints of chronic pain with New York Pain Management.

Our goal is to significantly reduce or completely eliminate your pain.

Take the first step towards living pain free call us today at 518-371-0777.



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