

Study: Patients often don't report pain

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A Rochester, Minn., study finds more than 20 percent of people with chronic pain don't seek medical help, suggesting many have unmet pain care needs.

The Mayo Clinic study looked at 3,575 people and, of the 2,211 respondents who reported pain of more than three months' duration, 22.4 percent said they had not informed their physician about their pain. The survey covered a cross-section of residents of Olmsted County, Minn., from March through June 2004.

It was not determined why the people did not seek pain treatment.

The importance of pain management has gained recognition during the last decade. In 1995, the American Pain Society declared pain to be the fifth vital sign, a designation to increase pain awareness among health care professionals.

Dr. Barbara Yawn, an Olmsted Medical Center physician and an author of the study, said: "Identification of patients in pain is essential to successful pain care. Despite significant efforts, successful pain care clearly is not happening. Physicians have a responsibility to ask their patients about chronic pain."

The research appears in the February issue of Mayo Clinic Proceedings.

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