



DEBRIEF

Patron: RADM Neil Ralph AO DSC RAN (RTD)

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A better life with chronic pain?... it can be done

Many veterans are living with chronic (persistent) pain, managing the best they can on their own at home. The nature of military service and the ageing veteran population means chronic pain is more prevalent in your community. Unfortunately, veterans (like the general community) are probably not getting best practice health care.

My story

If I knew then, what I know now – my health would be different. In 2006 I was running down the stairs, in socks, carrying a basket of washing, fell & fractured vertebrae. Even though I kept my husband awake, complaining about the pain, I only took a single paracetamol. After 2 days I was back at work as an advisory teacher, having physio before work & then driving long distances, lugging resources into different schools & generally overdoing it.

In 2008 I was stopped in my tracks one morning when my leg gave way. Being surprised rather than alarmed ... it came good, so I trundled off to work. However, following a lunchtime meeting, my leg paralyzed & siren screaming pain set in.

That afternoon I landed in the hospital emergency department.

During the consultation with the neurosurgeon I was given a lecture, "I can operate to fix the pain but I can't repair nerve damage. If you'd come to see me when you could walk, you'd be in a much better position, than the one you're in now." Two ops later the nerve damage has left me with continuous neuropathic pain, which I always have to manage. I'm in denial no more. I had rehabilitation & later attended a pain management clinic (PMC) ... a decision that gave me my life back: medication review, paced exercise/activity, routines, and helpful mind techniques, reorganizing home lessons & relaxation. When our group finished the PMC there was no support outside of hospital so, with the help of my husband, mates & the medical profession I founded APMA.

Of course, many veterans, and others I speak to now with chronic persistent pain have far worse injuries and diseases than mine. My story is a small one but the crucial factors I have learned from my experience are for everyone with pain:

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