



CIMEQ:

The battle against pain

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Dr. Pedro Pablo Benítez Núñez, Second Degree specialist in anesthesiology and head of the CIMEQ pain clinic.



Ozone discolysis is a treatment for painful cervical, lumbar and disc hernias. It eradicates compression and eases pain.

Pain is one of the more frequent reasons for visiting the doctor. It is such a common problem that many health institutions have created pain clinics that focus on the diagnosis and management of pain and offer special treatment to cure or at least ease chronic pain.

In Cuba, Havana's CIMEQ medical center has a pain clinic that has won national and international prestige for its outstanding work in this field.

In achieving the quality indicators that characterize services at this clinic, its staff has based its efforts on two pillars: first, the professional and ethical values of the technicians and specialists; and second, their advanced pain management techniques.

Dr. Pedro Pablo Benítez Núñez, a Second Degree specialist in anesthesiology and head of the pain clinic at CIMEQ, explained that the clinic receives patients who are referred from primary and secondary health care centers in the Cuban capital and throughout the country. Some refer themselves for consultations after failing to have success in treating their pain.

Innovative procedures

One of the most innovative procedures used at the CIMEQ clinic is pulsed or isothermal radiofrequency, which does not require collateral drugs or cause structural injury to patients, which was the case with conventional radiofrequency treatment, which was used years ago.

Pulsed radiofrequency is recommended for the treatment of cervical, dorsal and lumbar hernias and Failed Back Surgery Syndrome (which refers to chronic back and/or leg pain that is not relieved by—or occurs as a result of—spinal surgery). It is also used in treating vertebral fractures and neuralgia (with special effects on trigeminal neuralgia) and

for abdominal pain from oncological and non-oncological causes. And it is useful for treating myofascial face pain.

Patients generally receive this treatment as outpatients, although sometimes the magnitude of some interventional care can require staying overnight at the hospital. For example, that is necessary in the case of an epiduroscopy (an epidural spinal endoscopy), a vertebroplasty or a kyphoplasty, which are minimally invasive spine surgeries for the treatment of fractured vertebrae.

Patients also have to be admitted if they are to undergo an epiduroplasty with a Fogarty catheter, a very special technique used by this clinic to alleviate epidural fibrosis, which can occur after spinal cord surgery.

In Latin America, very few health institutions have equipment that is similar to or on a par with that of CIMEQ's pain clinic. It is also important to note that all treatment provided is very costly everywhere in the world. In Spain, for example, ozone discolysis treatment for painful cervical, lumbar and disc hernias would cost around 1,500 euros.

Every year, the CIMEQ pain clinic improves the lives of some 2,500 to 3,000 patients. Treatment is provided to an average of 50 people weekly. And if we look at its quality indicators (on an international scale) they are all above average. That is why its work has set an example for similar institutions in Cuba and Latin America.

According to Dr. Pedro Pablo Benítez, Algology (the branch of medicine concerned with the study of pain) is considered quite a novelty in Cuba, and CIMEQ is making solid progress in its excellent development here. Other Cuban institutions that are moving in the same direction include CIREN, the international centre for neurological restoration; the Hermanos Ameijeiras, Calixto García and Fructuoso Rodríguez clinical/ surgical hospitals, and Las Praderas health centre.



Patient Osmel Alba Oliveros receives ozone discolysis treatment. This substance is also a bactericide and does not need to be used with any other drugs.