



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2012

“What do we live for, if it is not to make life less difficult for each other?” - George Eliot

The Pain Community (TPC) is a national nonprofit organization that will provide people living with pain with the information, education, support, advocacy, and hope they need to gain strength and live their lives to the fullest.

The goal of TPC is to improve the overall health, wellbeing, and quality of life for people with pain. TPC will accomplish this by building a virtual community—a place where people with pain and their caregivers, families, and friends can connect with one another in a caring and safe space; have access to the most up-to-date information about pain and its management; and learn the skills needed to become advocates for themselves and others (from the personal to the policy level).

Why is TPC needed? TPC is a direct response to the unfortunate way that pain has been perceived and treated in the United States. The country desperately needs to shift its thinking about pain and the way it is managed. According to the landmark 2011 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, *“Relieving Pain in America, A Blueprint for Transforming Prevention, Care, Education, and Research,”* more than 100 million Americans live with pain that interferes with many aspects of their lives. Although pain is one of our nation’s greatest public health problems, few people with pain receive the care they need and deserve, and this is particularly true for underserved people.

Pain, especially chronic pain, is complex, encompasses a broad variety of conditions/diseases, and almost always requires individualized treatment that is interdisciplinary/integrative and addresses the whole person—mind, body, and spirit, and in the context of his or her community. Regrettably, most people with pain do not receive this type of pain care. The vast majority of people with pain are not thoroughly assessed and most are treated with single conventional modalities (most often with opioid analgesics, interventional procedures, or surgeries). While these treatments may provide temporary relief and some restoration of function, they also carry risks and in some circumstances may not be effective or appropriate for long-term pain management that allows people to achieve a state of “wellness.” In fact “wellness” is almost never set as a treatment goal. The message clinicians often communicate to patients is: “There is no cure for chronic pain. You probably will always have pain; take your medications (or have your procedures or surgeries); expect some relief that will improve function; and learn to live with pain as your *new normal*.” The Pain Community does not accept this. We know—and research supports—that when people receive integrative care, they can often *heal* and return to wholeness. People with pain can regain function and meaning, and, sometimes, even become pain free. It is the purpose of TPC to communicate these truths to people with pain, the public, policy makers, and the media as well as provide the tools, resources, and support and coaching people with pain need to positively change the course of their life journey.

To support this work, TPC will develop a strong and committed membership base, which will serve as the financial foundation of the organization. In addition, TPC will seek diversified funding (grants and gifts) from foundations, individuals, government and corporations.