

PRACTICE EXTENDERS

An app to help your patient with chronic pelvic pain

➔ With a multidisciplinary approach to managing chronic pain, it can be very helpful to monitor daily activities, goals, and tried treatments. This app can help your patient track her condition.

Jennifer Gunter, MD

In this series, I review what I call prescription apps—apps that you might consider recommending to your patient to enhance her medical care. Many patients are already looking at medical apps and want to hear your opinion. Often, the free apps I recommend to patients are downloaded before they leave my office. When recommending apps, their cost (not necessarily a measure of quality or utility) and platform (device that the app has been designed for) should be taken into account. It is helpful to know whether the app you are recommending is supported by your patient's smartphone.

Chronic pelvic pain: multifactorial

Chronic pelvic pain, like most chronic pain conditions, is multifactorial in nature. It is not



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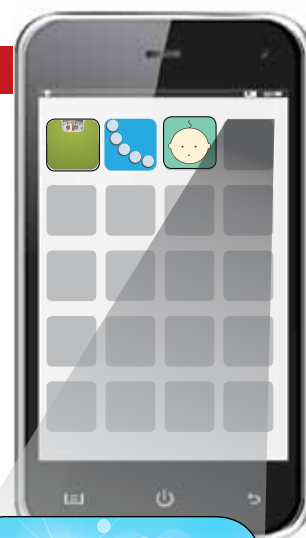
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surprising then that most women with chronic pelvic pain do best with a multidisciplinary management approach that addresses both physical and emotional well-being, including the mind–body aspect of chronic pain (how mood and emotions affect pain), exercise, pacing of activities, attention to sleep hygiene, and the role of dysfunctional eating patterns. However, a patient's access to formal mind–body programs or even a pain psychologist can be hard to come by for a variety of reasons.

An app that tracks pain and treatment

WebMD Pain Coach is a mobile mind–body program and pain coach all rolled into one. While specifically designed for nongynecologic pain conditions (fibromyalgia, migraine, back pain), the app works just as well for pelvic pain. Pain conditions, such as pelvic pain, that are not preloaded into the app are easy to add.^{1,2}

WebMD Pain Coach provides a way for the user to journal as well as track her pain scores, pain triggers, mood, sleep, diet, and response to therapies. It can provide a snapshot, yearly for instance, of tracked pain levels and is preloaded with goals that a user can customize easily. The app also is loaded with



An app, which can act as a mobile mind–body program, can be helpful to patients without access to such formal programs

excellent pain management tips, videos, and slide shows. There are more than 300 patient-focused articles from the archives of WebMD and other sources that have been reviewed by experts. Progress and notes can be converted into a PDF for use at home or with a health-care provider—a very helpful tool as it can be hard to arrange the many domains of food, rest, exercise, mood, treatments, and pain scores in an organized fashion.^{1,2}

Pros: With a multidisciplinary approach to managing chronic pain, it can be very helpful for patients to track their daily activity, pain triggers, pain levels, and tried therapies. The app provides an opportunity to learn more about the mind-body connection, which is a core component of effective pain management. This app also has excellent medical information and useful strategies for managing chronic pain. It's easy to use as a source

of information, a journal, and a pocket coach.

Cons: This is a free app for iPhone, iTouch, and the iPad—but currently only available for Apple products.

Verdict: This is a great tool on many levels. It would be useful for someone who just wants to track their pain and triggers, but also helpful for the patient who wants to obtain more control and learn more about managing pain. This app would be complementary for someone already engaged in mind-body work, but also be useful for someone who does not have access to those services. 📌

References

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This app can be “helpful for the patient who wants to obtain more control and learn more about managing pain.”

—Jennifer Gunter, MD

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