



Learning to
Apply
Mindfulness to
Pain

Newsletter #1: Connecting with LAMP

Letter from the LAMP Principal Investigator

I'm excited to be sending out our first LAMP study newsletter. In each issue we profile a member of our LAMP study team, a group of researchers, healthcare providers, and Veterans who are committed to improving pain care for Veterans. In this issue, we profile Sean Green, U.S. Army Veteran and member of the LAMP Study Advisory Panel. We also share tips and resources for dealing with pain, including VA resources that you might not know about. Do you have any tips or resources you'd like to share with others? Please let us know.

We plan to send out quarterly newsletters to everyone in the LAMP study. We will also make these newsletters available on our website: <http://lamp.umn.edu>. Feel free to reach out to us at 877-467-5079 or email us at vhaminLAMP@va.gov. We'd love to know what you think.



Best wishes,

Dr. Diana Burgess

"Participation in research projects like LAMP helps to advance the care Veterans receive and have earned. Expensive medications and imaging machines create the illusion that advances in healthcare are technological and ever more costly. But sometimes simple things can be transformational. And we believe the LAMP study is one of those things. Your participation may help other Veterans dealing with pain who are looking for a non-pill approach to relief."

-Dr. Greg Serpa, LAMP Team Member and Clinical psychologist, VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System



Did you know...

- 8 million adults have chronic pain that interferes with work and other life activities
- Veterans are more likely than non-Veterans to have chronic pain
- 2/3 of Veterans report having pain

We can change this!

The LAMP study has created new online mindfulness programs for pain, with input from Veterans like you. The goal of this study is to give Veterans new tools to better manage their pain. The LAMP study is 1 of 11 studies funded by the NIH-DoD-VA Pain Management Collaboratory to improve pain treatment for Veterans and Military Service Members.

Tips for Dealing with Pain

Tip #1: Keep Moving

Gentle exercise has many benefits. It keeps your joints lubricated and your muscles strong. It's good for your mental health and can help you sleep better and feel more energetic.

Walking is a safe, low impact exercise and is widely recommended for people with pain. Here are some tips:

- If you are just starting out, start slowly. Begin with short walking sessions and spread them throughout the day. Then work your way up to longer sessions.
- Find ways to build in walking throughout your day. Walk a little more when you go shopping or at work.
- Track your progress with your phone or exercise tracker.
- Walk with your co-workers, friends, and family.
- Make specific, detailed plans about where, when, and with whom you will walk.
- Make a plan for how you will handle obstacles that could stop you from walking. For example, what will you do if it's raining or if you just don't feel like walking?
- Remember, everyone has setbacks. If you fall out of your regular exercise routine, don't beat yourself up about it. Just begin again.
- Try the strategy of "pairing," where you do something fun only when you walk. Watch a favorite TV show only when you are on the treadmill. Or, listen to a favorite podcast only when you are walking.

Q & A with Sean Green, U.S. Army Veteran and Member of LAMP Study Advisory Panel



Q. Can you tell us about who you are and why pain research is important to you?

A. I am a U.S. Army Veteran who enjoys human anatomy coloring books, watching sitcoms from the 90's, and listening to music from the 80's. My initial interest in pain management research began with an insatiable thirst for knowledge to help me in managing my own chronic pain. The main reason why pain management research is important to me is because I personally know many Veterans who have an extremely difficult time in managing their pain. Often Veterans are simply not aware of the myriad of modalities, strategies, and resources available to adjunct their current pain management protocol. This is why I'm a staunch advocate of pain research, as well as advocating pain research strategies for Veterans.

Q. Why should Veterans consider participating in LAMP?

A. The information the LAMP study will provide will be another tool the Veteran may find extremely useful in managing their chronic pain. The LAMP study's team is comprised of researchers, health care providers, and fellow Veterans that are committed to improving pain care for Veterans.

Q. What would you say to a Veteran who feels isolated or hopeless about his or her pain?

A. If a fellow Veteran is feeling isolated or hopeless about their pain, I would inform them they do not have to navigate this chronic pain management journey alone. I would recommend the Veterans Affairs Veteran Crisis Line, where the Veteran can confidentially talk, text, or chat with qualified responders, in which many of the responders are Veterans.

<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>

Q. What other resources would you recommend to Veterans, to help them with their pain?

A. One other resource that comes to mind is the VA "Whole Health" program. This is a program that is highly patient centered and focuses on "what matters" to the Veteran. A team of Veterans Affairs professionals assist in developing a personalized health plan based on the Veteran's pain management needs and goals. Whole Health considers the Veteran's physical, emotional, mental, social, spiritual, and environmental influences in their lives. This is incredibly important in the realm of managing one's chronic pain.

<https://www.va.gov/wholehealth/>

Other Resources

The VA Office of Patient-Centered Care has many helpful resources related to mindfulness and other mind-body approaches to health.

- <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/veteran-resources/MobileApps-OnlineTools.asp>
- <http://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/veteran-handouts/index.asp>

There are also many helpful resources on the VA Pain Management Website including resources for self-management, complementary treatments and traditional medical treatment.

- https://www.va.gov/PAINMANAGEMENT/Veteran_Public/index.asp

We'd love to hear from you. Call us at 877-467-5079 or email us at vhaminLAMP@va.gov.

Check out our website at <http://lamp.umn.edu>.