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**American Academy of Pain Management Pain Program Accreditation:  
Description and Value**

**By  
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Outcomes Measurement**

In the April 1992 issue of *The Pain Practitioner* newsletter, the American Academy of Pain Management (the Academy) announced the creation of the Pain Program Accreditation (PPA) service. The purpose of the PPA was to give pain management programs the opportunity to demonstrate quality treatment and compliance with peer-reviewed standards established by pain practitioners. Over the years, these standards have been refined and revised to keep current with today's health care practice and regulatory environment. In 2006, the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of the Pain Program Accreditation Manual will be published.

Today, the Academy is the only organization that provides accreditation for large comprehensive multidisciplinary treatment programs and for pain management programs offered by smaller, formalized networks of solo practitioners. Accreditation is also offered to syndrome or modality-oriented clinics as long as a multi/interdisciplinary treatment philosophy can be demonstrated through appropriate consultation, referral, and documented communication among providers.

The purpose of accreditation through the Academy is to establish credibility for a pain program by demonstrating that patients receive appropriate services in a safe and effective fashion. In addition to the clinical services provided to patients, PPA standards also focus on the organization's ongoing business practices, personnel management, and the physical plant (with an emphasis on safety). The Academy's program standards do

not dictate which specific modalities must be present in a treatment program. Typically, however, multi/interdisciplinary approaches incorporate pharmacological, psychological/behavioral, and physical/rehabilitative components along with interventional/surgical methods. Non-allopathic methods (such as acupuncture and massage) are often included.

To meet the diverse needs of the Academy's membership and provide patient safeguards through the accreditation process, six classifications of pain programs may apply for accreditation:

- **Major comprehensive multidisciplinary pain program**—manages various types of painful conditions, conducts professional or community education and/or formal research programs, and involves a minimum of six (6) disciplines operating in an integrated fashion within the same organization.
- **Comprehensive multidisciplinary pain program**—manages various types of painful conditions, may conduct education or research programs, and involves a minimum of four (4) disciplines operating within the same organization.
- **Small multidisciplinary pain program**—manages various types of pain conditions and involves a minimum of two (2) disciplines operating within the same organization.
- **Network multidisciplinary pain program**—generally involves a solo practitioner or group of clinicians all of the same discipline who accomplish interdisciplinary care of various types of pain conditions by

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utilizing a formal network of closely coordinated independent professionals of varying disciplines.

- **Syndrome-oriented pain program**—manages a single type of pain syndrome (e.g., back pain, complex regional pain syndrome, headache, temporomandibular joint dysfunction) utilizing one or more clinicians of the same or different disciplines. Accomplishes interdisciplinary care through consultation and referral.
- **Modality-oriented pain program**—manages one or more pain syndromes by utilizing a single modality (e.g., acupuncture, biofeedback, counseling, hypnosis, nerve blocks, or transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation). Accomplishes interdisciplinary care through consultation and referral.

Specific standards were developed for each classification of pain programs. The most detailed standards were written for the three largest and most complex types of programs. Realistic standards were written to motivate solo practitioners and practitioners in syndrome or modality-oriented programs to address the multidisciplinary needs of patients.

Unlike the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, which requires that all accredited programs have a board certified medical director and a psychologist on staff, the Academy's system accredits programs headed by a qualified multidisciplinary pain practitioner from other disciplines.

A pain management programs that achieves accreditation through the Academy receives additional benefits including: an engraved plaque for display, use of the PPA

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logo for program materials, press releases from the Academy (upon request) to enhance marketing efforts, a listing on the Academy's website (with program description), photos of the facility, a link to the facility website, Academy quarterly publications, and reduced rates at the Annual Clinical Meeting for program staff. Articles like this one, spotlighting Academy-accredited pain programs, will be a regular feature in *The Pain Practitioner* magazine.

**An Interview with Dr. John Gilbert, Medical Director and President, Spine and Brain Neurosurgical Centers, Lexington, Pikeville, Florence, Hazard and London, Kentucky**

At the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Clinical Meeting in San Diego, CA, Dr. John Gilbert, Medical Director and President of Spine and Brain Neurosurgical Centers in Kentucky, received a plaque for the first reaccreditation of his Lexington facility. He is Clinical Professor of Neurosurgery at the Pikeville College School of Osteopathic Medicine and Assistant Clinical Professor at the University Of Kentucky College Of Medicine. He has held several hospital appointments as Chief of Neurosurgery. Dr. Gilbert also recently attained accreditation for four other facilities that he owns in London, Hazard, Pikeville and Florence, Kentucky. The Spine and Brain Neurosurgical Center, Lexington, an outpatient syndrome-oriented facility founded in 1995, specializes in the treatment of back and neck pain and headaches. The Centers' mission is to provide state-of-the-art neurosurgical and pain care for patients. Treatment is patient-centered and conservative in nature. The goal is to always preserve the dignity of life, to enhance the quality of life, and to achieve visible leadership as a health care provider. Medication management, injection, and surgical techniques are the primary treatment modalities used at the Center. Patients are

screened using the P-3 Pain Patient Profile, an instrument designed to identify patients who may benefit from referral for mental health services. The Center also utilizes a detailed patient controlled-substance contract that outlines patient responsibilities and clearly states grounds for termination from the program. Dr. Gilbert is the first person to accredit multiple sites with the Academy's Pain Program Accreditation service. We caught up with Dr. Gilbert in San Diego:

**Dr. Campbell:** Dr. Gilbert, when did you first seek accreditation?

**Dr. Gilbert:** In December 2001. We received accreditation for our Lexington office on April 19, 2002.

**Dr. Campbell:** Had you been a member of the Academy before that and for how long?

**Dr. Gilbert:** I have been a member of the American Academy of Pain Management since approximately 2000.

**Dr. Campbell:** Are you credentialed by the Academy?

**Dr. Gilbert:** Yes. In addition I have board-certification status from the American Board of Pain Medicine, the American Society of Addiction Medicine, the American Society of Neuroimaging (with an emphasis on MRI and CT of the nervous system), and the American Board of Neurological Surgery.

**Dr. Campbell:** Why did you seek accreditation for your pain program?

**Dr. Gilbert:** For several reasons. Pain management has always been a part of the practice of neurosurgery; however, we felt Pain Program Accreditation would improve the pain management component of our multi-specialty neuroscience practice. We reviewed several other accrediting organizations, such as CARF and JCAHO; however, Pain Program Accreditation offered by the American Academy of Pain Management was the only accreditation that focused on the practice of pain management. We have the only ACR (American College of Radiology) accredited MRI imaging services in our Hazard and London offices, and we will soon have them in our Pikeville office. Some payers require ACR accreditation for MRI images for inclusion in certain insurances. Similarly, we felt that by obtaining accreditation for our offices (including London, Hazard, Pikeville, Florence, and Lexington), we would be the first in these areas to have Pain Program Accreditation. Finally, we believed that Pain Program Accreditation would

force us to look at every detail of our pain practice in a focused manner and improve the quality of care that we provide for our patients.

**Dr. Campbell:** What were the benefits of your initial accreditation?

**Dr. Gilbert:** The primary benefit was the opportunity to demonstrate compliance of our pain management program with peer reviewed standards established by pain practitioners to represent quality treatment. We felt participation would help improve care, improve accountability, improve commitment to continuous quality improvement, and help promote standards of care in our pain management practice.

**Dr. Campbell:** Why did you decide to seek re-accreditation for your Lexington facility?

**Dr. Gilbert:** We were very pleased with our first Pain Program Accreditation experience and the thoroughness and attention to detail in the on-site survey. We decided to repeat the accreditation process in our Lexington office as well as at our four other outlying offices.

**Dr. Campbell:** You are the first organization to accredit so many sites, why did you decide to seek accreditation for each of your other clinical sites?

**Dr. Gilbert:** All of our offices are connected by T-lines, electronic medical records, and other technology. Office managers at each site, nursing staff, and physicians felt we could benefit at each location from the all day on-site review. We were so impressed with the thoroughness of the review and the practical recommendations for quality improvement with our initial review that we felt that it would be a benefit in each area. Finally, we wanted to have the first and only pain management programs in our five locations with Pain Program Accreditation through the American Academy of Pain Management—since it is the only pain management accreditation program that is tailored specifically to the complexities and intricacies of pain management practice.

**Dr. Campbell:** What has the process been like?

**Dr. Gilbert:** The process has been very useful, with minimal interruption of clinical services. The survey is actually done while patients are being seen and the entire process has been enjoyable and professional, and interaction with the Academy has been courteous. The staff was impressed with the Academy's thoroughness.

**Dr. Campbell:** What have been the major challenges you and your staff have faced as you have gone through the accreditation process?

**Dr. Gilbert:** The most difficult and challenging portion of the entire process is actually just getting started and completing the self-assessment, however, this is quite easy once you get started and it was very useful and practical to have details in a single large binder

as well as displaying such things as mission statement, patient bill of rights, building occupancy permits, etc.

**Dr. Campbell:** Describe your experience with your surveyor, Dr. Larry Short.

**Dr. Gilbert:** Dr. Short has been extremely helpful, courteous, kind, interested, and has put a great deal of effort into reviewing every detail of our practice and has been very helpful to our medical staff and administrative staff.

**Dr. Campbell:** From a business perspective, how do you think Pain Program Accreditation can help your organization?

**Dr. Gilbert:** Pain Program Accreditation improves the quality of care for the pain patient, which in turn, will improve the success of the business side of practicing pain management. Furthermore, in the future, I suspect similarly to MRI accreditation, payers will require some sort of accreditation to manage complex pain patients. I believe the Pain Program Accreditation offered by the American Academy of Pain Management is in the unique position to cover this complex sub-specialized area of medicine, which is pain management.

**Dr. Campbell:** How do you plan on using your accredited status to market your clinical facilities?

**Dr. Gilbert:** We will use the Pain Program Accreditation logo on all of our correspondence that we send out to our referring physicians. We only see patients at the request of referring physicians and always provide a consultation note back discussing our history, physical, impressions, diagnoses, and treatment recommendations and on this correspondence, we will include the Pain Program Accreditation logo.

**Dr. Campbell:** What has been the single most useful thing that your organization has learned during the accreditation process?

**Dr. Gilbert:** The American Academy of Pain Management, with its Pain Program Accreditation, truly is a practical partner in the care of pain patients. The only constant in the practice of pain management is 'change' and an ongoing relationship with the American Academy of Pain Management, as well as periodic review such as offered through Pain Program Accreditation, allows a practitioner to keep abreast of changes in the field and to incorporate them into practice efficiently.

**Dr. Campbell:** Have you noticed any response on the part of the community, referring physicians, or patients, to the fact that you have obtained Pain Program Accreditation through the Academy?

**Dr. Gilbert:** The response from all of the above has been very positive! Chronic pain and the management and treatment of chronic pain are poorly understood by many in the medical community as well as in the lay community. Accreditation will help improve the

quality of care and make available a resource to our community that has not been available before.

**Dr. Campbell:** What advice would you give to other facility program directors as they prepare applications for accreditation?

**Dr. Gilbert:** The best advice I can give is to just go ahead and start. It is a great process. It will improve your practice and will be helpful to your physicians and staff.

**Dr. Campbell:** What advice would you give other facility program directors and staff as they prepare for their on-site surveys?

**Dr. Gilbert:** Following the guidelines and frequent communication with the Academy while completing the self-assessment portion of the application (prior to submitting the application and prior to the on-site survey) is very useful.

**Dr. Campbell:** Dr. Gilbert, I want to thank you for taking the time to answer these questions to help our readers better understand the benefits of Pain Program Accreditation. The Academy looks forward to a long, rewarding relationship with the Spine and Brain Neurosurgical Centers as you continue to provide quality pain management in the state of Kentucky.

**An Interview with Dr. Lawrence O. Short, PhD,  
Pain Program Accreditation Principal Surveyor**

To obtain the surveyor's perspective on PPA, we also spoke with Dr. Larry Short, the Academy's principle surveyor for Pain Program Accreditation. Dr. Short completed the survey of the Spine and Brain Neurosurgical Centers. Dr. Short is currently a Professional Counselor licensed in both Kentucky and Texas. He has private practices in both states. He holds a Ph. D. in Counseling from the University of Colorado, Boulder, conferred in 1980. He earned recognition as a National Certified Counselor in 1983 and as an AAPM Diplomate in 1992. He has served on the Academy's Board of Advisors and Pain Program Accreditation Committee for over ten years and has been an active surveyor during most of that period. He has been involved in authoring and/or presenting more than 60 nationally-based publications/presentations in the fields of counseling, pain

