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Chronic pain control is probably the most important challenge of our times. The analgesic and anti-inflammatory drugs are the most prescribed drugs after those for cardiovascular diseases. The importance of a common taxonomy, the need for general management guidelines and new pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatment, the central role of pain clinics and their integration with patients' families are the unavoidable opportunities of this new millennium.

Among the large number of Web sites dedicated to chronic pain, I have chosen for this issue the Web pages prepared by the three major scientific societies that operate worldwide in the fields of pain research, education and care. Throughout these virtual "pain gates" one can browse in the Web area dedicated to pain and obtain a comprehensive review on this argument.

International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP)
www.halcyon.com/iasp

IASP is an international, multidisciplinary, non-profit professional association dedicated to furthering research on pain and improving the care of patients with pain. Membership in IASP is open to scientists, physicians, dentists, psychologists, nurses, physical therapists, and other health professionals actively involved in pain research, diagnosis and care of pain. IASP is one of the largest scientific societies in the world, and currently includes almost 7 thousand members from 114 countries. The 62 member categories encompass all medical specialists, psychologists, nurses, lawyers, publishers, sociologists and many other professionals that are daily or occasionally involved with pain problems and dilemmas.

Among the great objectives of IASP is to foster and encourage research of pain mechanisms and pain syndromes and to assist patients with acute and chronic pain. In addition IASP promotes education and training in the field of pain, encourages development of a uniform classification and nomenclature regarding pain and pain syndromes.

The IASP Web site presents all chapters that are associated with IASP. In fact, IASP is not a federation and its national and regional chapters function as independent units. By clicking on boxes of each chapter you can access information on local activities, and additionally you may visit the national Web site, read information on national meetings and contact the chapter directly. IASP as a nongovernmental organization (NGO) has been affiliated with World Health Organization (WHO) (www.halcyon.com/iasp/who.html or www.who.int/ina-ngo/ngo/ngo028.htm) since 1988.

Among the various sections that are accessible from the homepage, I suggest those dedicated to publications, grants/awards and resources. The first section reports two interesting subsections, dedicated to pain terminology and to a virtu-

al pocket dictionary of pain terms (based on *Classification of Chronic Pain*, 2nd edn. IASP Task Force on Taxonomy, H. Merskey, N. Bogduk (eds), IASP Press, 1994). The purpose of this section is to offer a convenient source of pain terminology that is updated and evolves as the field progresses, to ultimately avoid diagnostic confusion in the management of pain patients. The section dedicated to grants/awards contains announcements for the IASP research grant, the John J. Bonica Fellowship and Distinguished Lecture, and the Patrick D. Wall Young Investigator Award.

The resource section contains a link with the John C. Liebenskind History of Pain Collection at the Louis M. Darling Biomedical Library at UCLA (www.library.ucla.edu/libraires/biomed/his/pain.htm), where it is possible to find 40 oral histories in the field of pain from interviews with leading pain personalities such as John Bonica, Patrick Wall, Ainsley Iggo, and Ronald Melzack. A link to the online version of the official IASP journal *Pain* is also available (www.elsevier.nl/homepage/sah/pain/).

American Pain Society (APS)
www.ampainsoc.org/

The APS is the largest chapter of IASP and has 3000 members. APS is a multidisciplinary organization of basic and clinical scientists, practicing clinicians, policy analysts, and others. APS's mission is to advance pain-related research, education, treatment and professional practice. This site contains the list of APS's major activities, including announcements for scientific congresses, a guide to finding a *pain treatment center*, and a link to the APS's *The Journal of Pain* (www.jpain.org). The section entitled Advocacy and Policy is dedicated to a much debated argument: the treatment of pain at the end of life. Despite the suboptimal control of pain symptoms in cancer, probably because healthcare systems have been designed around disease cure rather than palliation, APS officially opposes the legalization of physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia. Many arguments are there reported including the regulation and control of supportive care substances and the respect of patients' and families' values and preferences regarding end-of-life care.

American Academy of Pain Management (AAPM)
www.aapainmanage.org

The AAPM highlights its own activities in this Web site. Both professionals and patients can obtain at distinct levels membership in this academy. A particular page is dedicated to an innovative online distance learning program with a full-range educational content on pain (www.aapm.digiscript.com). A valuable resource for current medical information on pain management is also available. A section is dedicated to the link with the AAPM official journal, *American Journal of Pain Management* (<http://168.49.128.7/>).