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## HEALTH & MEDICINE



**HEALTH TREND REPORT:**

### Innovations in Pain Management

**By: Bill Beckman, RPh**

If you have ever had an injury or surgery, you may remember how much pain you were in. And I'm sure you were relieved when the pain went away! For the 10% - 20% of Americans who suffer chronic pain that simply never goes away on its own, managing the pain becomes a real priority. People with cancer, fibromyalgia, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis or those who suffer from migraines, musculoskeletal pain or neuropathic pain, often need effective pain control therapies to sleep, work effectively, and to try living a full life.

In the past, attempts at controlling or eliminating chronic pain have focused on finding a single medication that will work. Classically, this meant long-term narcotics that brought a host of side effects as well as dependence. More recently, clinicians have begun to attack the problem using multiple medications with different mechanisms of action including non-steroidal anti-inflammatory agents that reduce inflammation, muscle relaxants, local anesthetics and nerve blockers. This combination of ingredients attacks pain from all angles and when used in concert, the results can be very impressive

As a compounding pharmacy, we make every prescription from scratch using one or more medications in the dosage strength or form that meets the individual patient's needs. When it comes to creating a customized pain management therapy, we take this approach one step further. Many oral pain medications are notorious for causing stomach upset and most recently, have come under scrutiny for their potential to cause heart attacks. We eliminate these side effects by compounding the medication as a topical gel that gets rubbed on the skin right at the site of the pain.

Topical pain medications have been widely used in Europe for years. So why aren't they prescribed much in the U.S.? Most often, doctors are unaware of their availability and few pharmacies are equipped to compound topical formulations. We can formulate hundreds of different pain gels and creams that help treat the pain right at its source. How do these gels work? Unlike commercial moisturizers or suntan lotions designed to remain on the top layer of skin, we formulate the prescription with a penetrating agent that pushes the medication deep into the tissues. By applying the cream at the source of pain, a higher concentration of medication reaches the site while eliminating bothersome gastro-intestinal side effects.

For athletes like Pam Burton of Gloucester, the topical pain reliever was a "must" after injuring her knee while kickboxing. "I had a business trip in London and had to be able to get around. Most pain relievers upset my stomach so I dreaded the thought of taking them the whole time I was away. Looking back, I can't imagine what I

would have done without Custom Medicine's pain cream".

Unfortunately, not all pain medications can be given topically. However, when oral medications are required, there are many instances when a special formulation is beneficial. For example, some of the commercially available doses of combination pain medications can cause severe constipation and tax the liver. In this case, we might work with the prescriber to change the concentration of one of the pain relievers and incorporate a mild laxative. Side effects are eliminated and the medication is still being delivered in a single dose.

If your doctor doesn't know about Custom Medicine, we encourage you to have him or her contact us at 978-524-4800 or visit our website at [www.custommedicine.com](http://www.custommedicine.com). We work closely with clinicians and patients in a triad of care to deliver the best possible medication solution.

*Bill Beckman, RPh is one of only 3,500 independent, community pharmacists nationwide who practices the art of pharmacy compounding that was the standard for hundreds of years. He owns Custom Medicine Pharmacenter with his wife Mary in Beverly, MA. As a registered pharmacist, he is a member of the Professional Compounding Centers of America. In addition to customizing topical pain relievers, the pharmacy specializes in pediatric medicine, discontinued product formulations, veterinary prescriptions, and bio-identical hormone replacement. Custom Medicine Pharmacenter, located at 25 Cabot Street in Beverly, is open Monday to Friday, 9:30 am - 5:30 pm and by appointment.*

The pharmacy can be reached by calling 978-524-4800 or by emailing [info@custommedicine.com](mailto:info@custommedicine.com).

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