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## Specialists call for better understanding of chronic pain resulting from COVID-19

With more than one in three people unable to work due to chronic pain, Australia and New Zealand's leading specialist pain medicine physicians are meeting this weekend to consider how the COVID-19 pandemic has shaped the experiences of practitioners and their patients.

The Faculty of Pain Medicine (FPM) of the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists, is holding its first face-to-face annual Spring Meeting since 2019.

The three-day meeting in Noosa Heads from 14 to 16 October will bring together specialists from pain medicine, anaesthesia, rehabilitation, palliative care, psychiatry, general practice and allied health.

Presentations include developments in neuromodulation, pelvic pain treatments, telehealth in the time of COVID-19 and a national pain management education strategy.

FPM Dean Dr Kieran Davis said nearly 100 specialist pain medicine physicians would be at the "Better together" meeting.

"The last three years have been challenging for all medical practitioners, including specialist pain medicine physicians and their patients. What we're now starting to understand is that pain related to COVID-19 is often overlooked and under-appreciated," he explains.

"About five percent of Australian survivors of COVID-19 had persistent symptoms three months after infection and this includes headaches, joint and muscle pain.

"Our role as specialist pain medicine physicians is to help patients manage their pain and ensure they are getting the best treatment they need. This meeting is an important opportunity to hear from a broad range of specialists who work together as multi-disciplinary teams to treat chronic pain patients."

Dr Davis says the cost to the community of chronic pain is significant. In 2018 the cost of the Australian economy of chronic pain was estimated at up to nearly \$A140 billion.

"In Australia, almost one in five adults live with chronic pain and more than two million Australians living with chronic pain are of working age," he says.

"The right treatment can be the difference between someone getting on with their life after injury or illness, to that person losing their job, their friends and family and sometimes their lives to the persistent pain."

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