

SPRING 2017

# PAINNEWS

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ADDRESSING THE UTAH

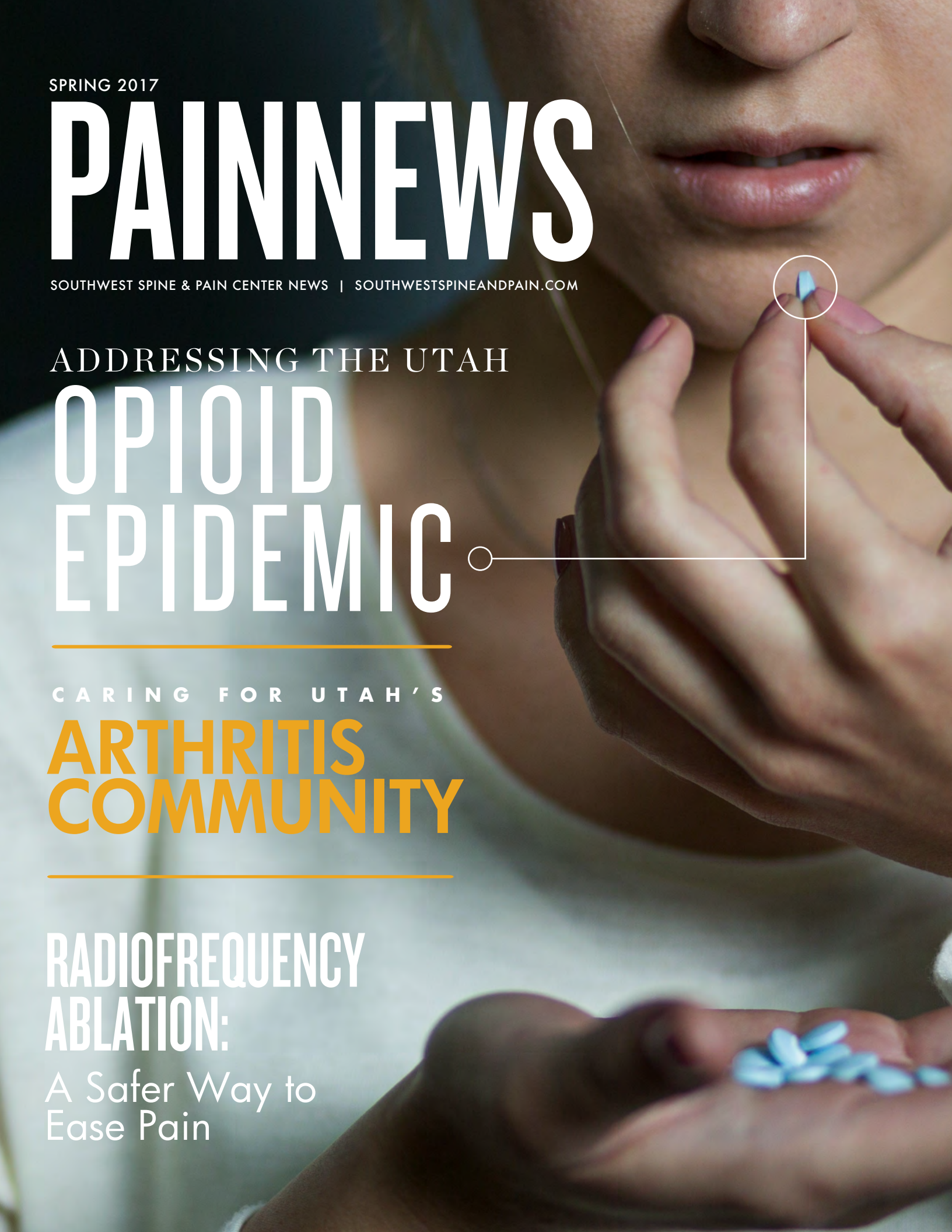
# OPIOID EPIDEMIC

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ADDRESSING THE UTAH

# OPIOID EPIDEMIC

*DID YOU KNOW THAT UTAH HAS THE SEVENTH HIGHEST DRUG OVERDOSE RATE IN THE UNITED STATES? OR, THAT SIX UTAHANS DIE EVERY WEEK FROM AN OPIOID OVERDOSE?\**

These troubling statistics validate the severity of Utah's opioid crisis - a crisis that resulted in 268 deaths from 2013-2015. Unfortunately, the misuse and abuse of prescription opioids can lead to an addiction, which, in turn, can fuel an addiction of illicit drugs like heroin.

That said, it's imperative Utahans remain aware of the dangerous repercussions associated with prescription opioids. While it is possible for these medications to be used responsibly, as they often are under the medical supervision of our pain and spine care specialists at Southwest Spine and Pain Center, our team still recognizes that we must do our part to stop this opioid epidemic. We specialize in pain management and offer an array of interventional, alternative, and behavioral health services to help patients achieve optimal pain relief.

From steroid injections and minimally invasive spinal procedures to regenerative medicine and counseling, our expertly trained physicians administer extraordinary pain care to help patients live life to the fullest. While these treatment approaches are highly successful in providing adequate pain relief, Southwest Spine and Pain Center still offers medication management as a service for patients with chronic pain conditions. As such, we'd like to provide these patients with a few pointers if they believe they are on the brink of an opioid addiction.

## **Take Your Medication as Prescribed**

First and foremost, it's important patients take their prescribed medication at the intervals set by their SWSP physician. If you experience breakthrough pain, or your pain worsens over time, be sure to schedule an appointment with your SWSP physician right away. Do not take more of your pain medication, as this could increase your risk of opioid dependency.

## **Do Not Share Your Medication with Others**

Stop The Opidemic made an excellent point about sharing medications with others – "By sharing your prescription, you may think you are helping, but you could be leading someone down a dangerous path. Besides, sharing prescriptions is illegal."\* If you have a friend or loved one who suffers from chronic pain, do not share your medications with them. Instead, refer them to Southwest Spine and Pain Center for specialized care.

## **Seek Help**

Do not be afraid to seek help if you or someone you know is suffering from an opioid addiction. Also, make sure you are talking to your friends, loved ones, and children about the dangers of misusing or abusing prescription opioids. Being open to this discussion will foster growth among yourself and the special people in your life, which is necessary to avoid opioid addictions and overdoses.

**To learn more about the dangers surrounding the misuse and abuse of prescription opioids, please visit <http://www.opidemic.org/>.**

\*STATISTICS AND QUOTES BROUGHT TO YOU BY STOP THE OPIDEMIC, A CAMPAIGN PUT ON BY THE UTAH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



# CARING FOR UTAH'S ARTHRITIS COMMUNITY



According to findings from the National Health Interview Survey, approximately 20% of adults over the age of 18 living in Utah suffer from arthritis. That number translates to about 435,000 individuals. It's clear to see that arthritis is a major concern for residents throughout the state, and Southwest Spine and Pain Center has made it their mission to provide pain relief to Utah's growing arthritis community.

While conservative techniques, such as rest, ice, and over-the-counter pain relievers may be helpful for some patients, most people with advanced stages of arthritis require progressive treatment for longer lasting pain relief. Fortunately, there are several interventional pain therapies available at Southwest Spine and Pain Center for patients suffering from moderate to severe cases of arthritis.

## What are the causes and symptoms of arthritis?

Before we jump into the different treatment techniques, it's crucial patients educate themselves on the causes and symptoms related to arthritis. Moreover, there are different types of arthritis that often require different kinds of treatment. Osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis are among the most common types of arthritis; however, these two forms of arthritis are quite different from one another. For example, osteoarthritis is a degenerative condition while rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disorder.

Therefore, osteoarthritis typically develops with age as our joints experience natural "wear and tear," and rheumatoid arthritis is often a product of our genetics. Symptoms of both conditions often include **stiffness of the affected joint(s); limited mobility and a smaller range of motion in the joint; constant achy pain and pain flare-ups; difficulty grabbing objects; swelling, and fatigue.**

## How can Southwest Spine and Pain Center help?

While there is no cure for arthritis, patients can rest assured knowing quality pain relief is possible. The team at Southwest Spine and Pain Center will typically recommend a combination of conservative, alternative, and interventional pain therapies to help patients reduce their pain symptoms. Joint injections are typically the first line of treatment from an interventional pain care approach because they deliver a steroid medication into the damaged, painful joint.

It's important to note these injections are not a long-term solution, but they may offer far fewer side effects than oral medication. Additionally, these injections can be repeated if necessary. Most patients with moderate to severe cases of arthritis are considered candidates for this treatment option. In addition to interventional treatment, an SWSP physician may recommend a change in diet and an individualized physical therapy regimen to patients who may experience increased pain from excess weight being placed on the painful joint. Moreover, physical therapy can help patients increase their flexibility and balance so they can avoid further joint damage from accidental falls.

**If you're interested in learning more about arthritis treatment, talk to your SWSP physician today.**



# RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION: A Safer Way to Ease Pain

As we mentioned in the previous article, our beloved state is currently facing an opioid epidemic. In fact, it's reported that 80% of Utah's heroin users began their addiction with prescription opioids. That said, it's become very clear to the spine and pain care specialists at Southwest Spine and Pain Center that the misuse and abuse of opioids is a very real problem affecting the community; a problem that needs to be discussed openly with family members, friends, and loved ones.

The physicians at Southwest Spine and Pain Center are leaders in pain management, having received training from world-class institutions like Mayo Clinic, John Hopkins, and Harvard. They recognize prescription medications are highly effective when they're used appropriately. However, for patients with an increased risk of opioid dependency, alternative treatment options may be necessary to provide pain relief while preventing at-risk patients from developing an opioid addiction.

Steroid injections are often the first line of treatment for patients suffering from chronic pain. Nevertheless, they are not for everyone – some conditions may not benefit from steroid injections, and it is possible for patients to experience adverse effects from the corticosteroid medication or anesthetic.

On the other hand, steroid injections may be incredibly effective, but only at providing short-term pain relief. That's when physicians at Southwest Spine and Pain Center may recommend radiofrequency ablation, a minimally invasive procedure that uses electrical currents from radio waves to heat damaged nerve tissue to reduce pain signals.

## WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION?

This safe, minimally invasive outpatient procedure is typically recommended for patients who suffer from arthritis, herniated discs, occipital neuralgia, abdominal pain, and other chronic pain conditions. Radiofrequency ablation is usually completed in 30 - 40 minutes, so patients can return home that same day. During the procedure, a local anesthetic is administered before an SWSP physician inserts a thin needle into the affected area. Using fluoroscopic guidance, the needle is guided to a target area and a microelectrode is injected to begin the stimulation process.

Throughout the procedure, an SWSP physician will ask the patient questions about his or her pain levels to determine the correct location. Once the placement is verified, the radiofrequency process begins and the electrode is heated, burning the surrounding tissues and nerves. Patients may experience pain relief lasting anywhere from six to 12 months depending on their condition and the severity of their pain symptoms.

**Interested in knowing more? Talk to your SWSP physician about undergoing radiofrequency ablation.**

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