

## VULVAL PAIN INFORMATION FOR REFERRING DOCTORS

Dear Colleague,

This leaflet has been designed to provide more information regarding the diagnosis of chronic vulval pain and its management. Guidelines are principally as in other chronic pain syndromes. In the case of introital/penetrative pain, specific treatments such as physiotherapy with pelvic floor biofeedback are used.

Generally a shared care approach works best. In the short term, we may ask your assistance to optimize medication (low dose tricyclic) dose titration and side effect monitoring. As in other pain syndromes, consistent validation and supportive care are vital to management. Partners will usually benefit from inclusion in some counselling sessions.

We enclose 2 pamphlets:-

- a patient information pamphlet
- a pamphlet detailing our use of pain medication.

The mainstays of management are:

- the exclusion of acute intercurrent inflammatory conditions (commonly Candida, herpes simplex, dermatitis and UTIs)
- any combination of the following:-
  1. low dose tricyclic antidepressants
  2. pelvic floor biofeedback
  3. topical local anaesthetic
  4. emotional and/or sexual counselling.

Improvement is generally gradual over several months but symptoms can persist for some years and may be quite variable, even without intercurrent infections.

If a tricyclic has been started, an appointment with yourself may be required in a few weeks, mainly to observe side effects of the medication. An alternative tricyclic may be needed if sedation is excessive. Pain response usually occurs at around 30 mg, but doses up to about 75 mg may be needed. Would you kindly monitor dose titration. An effective dose would improve the pain by about 70%. Higher doses can be trialled. The effective dose is usually maintained for around 6 months, and then gradually weaned.

Where physiotherapy referral has been organised, we will organize a review appointment after this has commenced.

Generally, a review appointment will be made here in about 2 months, and then at longer intervals according to response.

It needs to be emphasized that a cure of all symptoms is frequently not possible, but a significant improvement can usually be expected over some months.

Please be in contact at any stage for specific assistance.