Pain relief seems to be a medical Cinderella specialty.

Typically, patients will be subjected to waiting first to see the GP, then, once all avenues have been exhausted, being referred to a pain clinic, which is all too often seen as a ?last resort' rather than the first port of call.

Commonly waiting times are months rather than weeks. In London, 42% of pain patients wait more than 6 months to be seen. The CSAG report ? patients wait more than 22 weeks for outpatient appointment.

By the time the patient finally arrives at the pain clinic, numerous secondary factors have arisen and need to be addressed.

These include:

- physical factors: deconditioning, muscle tension causing widespread pain, possible central sensitisation, loss of mobility, insomnia
- psychological factors: anger, anxiety, fear, depression, despair, distrust of doctors,
- socioeconomic factors: loss of job, require state benefits, breakdown of relationship, spouse may have to stop working to look after patient etc.
- breakdown of therapeutic relationship: healthcare staff feel disempowered, patients feel disillusioned

Repairing the damage that could have been avoided is going to take time and resources.