

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF ARACHNOIDITIS A 'SUPERFLUX OF PAIN'

The title of this piece derives from phrase 'superflux of pain' used by the poet Swinburne, in his poem 'Anactoria' written in 1866. In the same poem, he writes:

'Strain out thy soul with pangs too soft to kill,
Intolerable interludes, and infinite ill';

Arachnoiditis is not a terminal illness, it does not kill us, but it can occasion

'intolerable interludes and infinite ill.'

It is important for us to recognise the psychological impact of our chronic illness.
It is also vital for medical personnel involved in our care to be aware of this aspect of the condition.

'The relief of suffering and the cure of disease must be seen as twin obligations of a medical profession that is truly dedicated to the care of the sick' ([\[1\]](#))

Doctors need to be aware that a caring approach can work wonders; Compassion is the keynote, and a willingness to really engage with the patient.

'Of what use is compassion that does not take its object into its arms?'

(Antoine de Saint Exupery)

In this series of articles, I am hoping to address the many and varied issues to do with the way in which arachnoiditis affects our lives in the emotional and social sense.

What are the main psychosocial aspects of chronic illness?

- Why we need a therapeutic alliance: the doctor/patient relationship
- The concept of 'illness behaviour'
- Chronic pain myths
- Disability and Invalidism
- Loss
- Adjustment /Grief
- Describing our illness
- Ways in which we think and feel
- Anxiety
- Depression:
- Suicide
- Cognitive impairment (thinking/memory)

- Insomnia/Fatigue
- Relationship difficulties
- Family problems
- Caregiving
- Children
- Assessment
- Ways of coping
- Psychological treatment

- Pharmacological treatment

- Spiritual/philosophical issues
- Support groups:

I shall aim to address each of these aspects in turn. Inevitably, there will be some crossover between topics. I will also be looking at chronic illness in children.

[\[1\]](#) Wallston K, Wallston B, Smith S, et al. Current Psychological Research and Reviews 1987; 6(1): 5-25. Perceived control and health.