What Are Fibromyalgia Treatment Centers, and How Do They Work?

by MARIANNE BROWN

Understanding the Pros and Cons of Fibromyalgia Treatment Centers

People diagnosed with fibromyalgia may need a series of different treatments. This could mean that you may have to attend several different places to visit specialists who may work in conjunction with each other, such as a treatment center.

Treatment centers can help develop a combined treatment plan tailored to each individual. Personalized treatment plans are typically fluid and changeable, depending on your health needs at that time. At a treatment center, different doctors and specialists are available under one roof.

What Services do Treatment Centers Offer?

According to my research of the centers, comprehensive treatment of fibromyalgia tends to fall into four broad categories:

Education

Research has shown that providing information about the disease, normalizing, and validating the patients' experience is an essential part of the treatment.

Perhaps one of the most important factors in improving the symptoms is for the patient to understand the range of these that they may experience, learn the causes of flares, and to recognize the need for lifestyle adaptation to attempt to manage their disease.

Symptom Management

Conventional medicines to address the range of symptoms is the cornerstone of treating fibromyalgia. Generally, medications are used to manage pain, fatigue, and psychological distress, as well as to improve other health issues associated with fibromyalgia. For example, over-the-counter or prescription medications may be essential in reducing symptoms and minimizing disability.

While it is important to address depression and pain, it is also important to minimize fatigue by promoting healthy sleep.

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT)

CBT involves assisting persons with fibromyalgia to self-manage their disease by learning and applying a range of techniques. For example, techniques such as relaxation therapy, coping skills, cognitive pain management, and eliciting social support have been shown in several clinical trials to reduce symptoms and improve quality of life.

Complementary Approaches

There are dozens of complementary therapies to treat fibromyalgia symptoms as I am sure you aware already. Complementary remedies include, but are not limited to:

- Physical therapy
- Therapeutic massage
- Myofascial release therapy
- Water therapy
- Exercise and physical activity
- Acupressure
- Application of heat or cold
- Acupuncture
- Yoga
- Relaxation exercises
- Breathing techniques
- Aromatherapy
- Biofeedback
- Herbs
- Hypnosis
- Nutritional supplements
- Osteopathic or chiropractic manipulation

The Pros of Admitting into a Fibromyalgia Treatment Center

I know from experience, and I am assuming that some of you also understand the negative effects of traveling from one appointment to another and visiting multiple specialists. I found that this process increased not only my stress levels but also my fatigue. It can invariably take over our lives and give us little time to enjoy life's little pleasures.

It can be rewarding to have multiple physicians and/or health care providers all available under one roof that are knowledgeable about fibromyalgia. These individuals can work together and detail an integrative treatment approach with the patient to develop a plan that addresses our unique needs.

Your regular doctor may not be a specialist in fibromyalgia. Doctors based in the community tend to treat patients with minor or chronic illnesses and refers to those with serious conditions to a hospital. Some of the treatments that you may want to try may need a referral to several different specialists. This is when the treatment center may be the best option for the reasons already mentioned above.

From personal experience, I found that the cost of travel and treatments when visiting multiple specialists was expensive, and I found it difficult to keep track of this. Not every treatment may be available under medical insurance. With a treatment center, there may be one overall cost that incorporates the various treatments recommended and could be easier to track. Sometimes this may be split into a monthly fee, and some centers offer a personalized payment plan, should these not be available under your medical insurance.

The Cons of Admitting into a Fibromyalgia Treatment Center

On the flip side to one of the pros mentioned above; the costs of using a treatment center could quickly escalate into an unaffordable option for you or your medical insurance company. The center may not be available through your medical insurance, and you might have to pay for the treatment plan yourself. To counteract this, always check with your insurance provider first, before joining and contracting with the center.

You may want to try a particular treatment type that may not be available at your chosen center; therefore, please check before starting any plans.

You could get tied into a lengthy contract with the treatment center that may not have been made clear at the consultation process. This potential issue can be mitigated, and I would recommend that you ask for all available literature beforehand, this must include all costs and contract information.

Ask for a consultation. Most centers should not charge you for a meeting. At this meeting, jot down any questions you have beforehand. You may bring a friend too, as this can help you pick up on anything you may have missed or forgotten, after the meeting. Make notes from the consultation and ask for a follow-up, if necessary.

In my opinion, one of the most worrying aspects of a treatment center is finding the right one. Again this potential issue can be mitigated, and I will go into how in the next section.

How to Find the Right Fibromyalgia Treatment Center for You

First, ask your regular doctor for a referral, or call your medical insurance company and ask for a list of centers in your area. You could also ask any friends with fibromyalgia for recommendations. Online reviews may also be an option, but research has shown that a large number of people only go online to leave negative reviews, so please take your time to read a selection of reviews first.

You could reach out to fibro support groups such as the National Fibromyalgia & Chronic Pain Association or the National Fibromyalgia Association to get the names of centers in your area.