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Opinion

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Pain should be adequately treated

There is a plague affecting West Virginia, and it is silently yet steadily eroding the quality of life of residents across the Mountain State. From Bluefield to Wheeling, Huntington to Martinsburg, our citizens are suffering from arthritis, back pain, migraines and pain caused by countless other ailments.

West Virginia is, quite literally, crippled by pain.

Pain is a serious medical condition that is often misunderstood. According to a recent survey, about 70 percent of the people in West Virginia suffer from moderate to severe pain on a regular basis, and more than half endure pain every day.

The circumstances become more disturbing as two-thirds of those surveyed indicate they do not know where to turn for help or understand that there are treatments available that can help ease their suffering.

The figures released in the survey are staggering. But there is hope for these people, and the West Virginia Pain Initiative is dedicated to reaching those suffering in pain, raising awareness about treatment options and bringing hope to the hopeless.

As part of these efforts, the West Virginia Pain Initiative is coordinating the 2005 West Virginia Pain Summit, a forum of health care professionals, lawmakers and consumers coming together to identify and discuss barriers to effective pain management in West Virginia.

The resources available at the Pain Summit will be invaluable, and I encourage both those suffering from pain and their caregivers to consider attending the summit Oct. 14 at the Charleston Town Center Marriott.

The 2005 West Virginia Pain Summit is free and open to the public. Coalition members include the West Virginia Hospice Council, the American Cancer Society, the Mountains of Hope Comprehensive Cancer Program and West Virginia Center for End-of-Life Care.

For more information, contact Cindy Jamison at (877) 209-8086 or cjamison@hsc.wvu.edu.

People don't have to live and suffer in pain. Together we can ease pain in West Virginia.

Jim Keresztury
Morgantown

Keresztury is executive director of the West Virginia Pain Initiative, a coalition working to raise awareness and educate West Virginians about pain management. He coordinates the coalition from his offices at the Mary Babb Randolph Cancer Center at West Virginia University.