



DEPARTMENT OF ANAESTHESIA  
& PERIOPERATIVE MEDICINE  
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# THE PERSON BEHIND THE PAIN

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# WHAT IS PAIN?

- Is this person in pain?



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*Is this man feeling pain?*



# SO WHAT IS PAIN?

- A high order, somatosensory construct in response to perceived *threat*
- A *conscious* sensory emotion to motivate a change in behaviour



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# DOES THIS PERSON HAVE PAIN?



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# NOCICEPTION VS PAIN

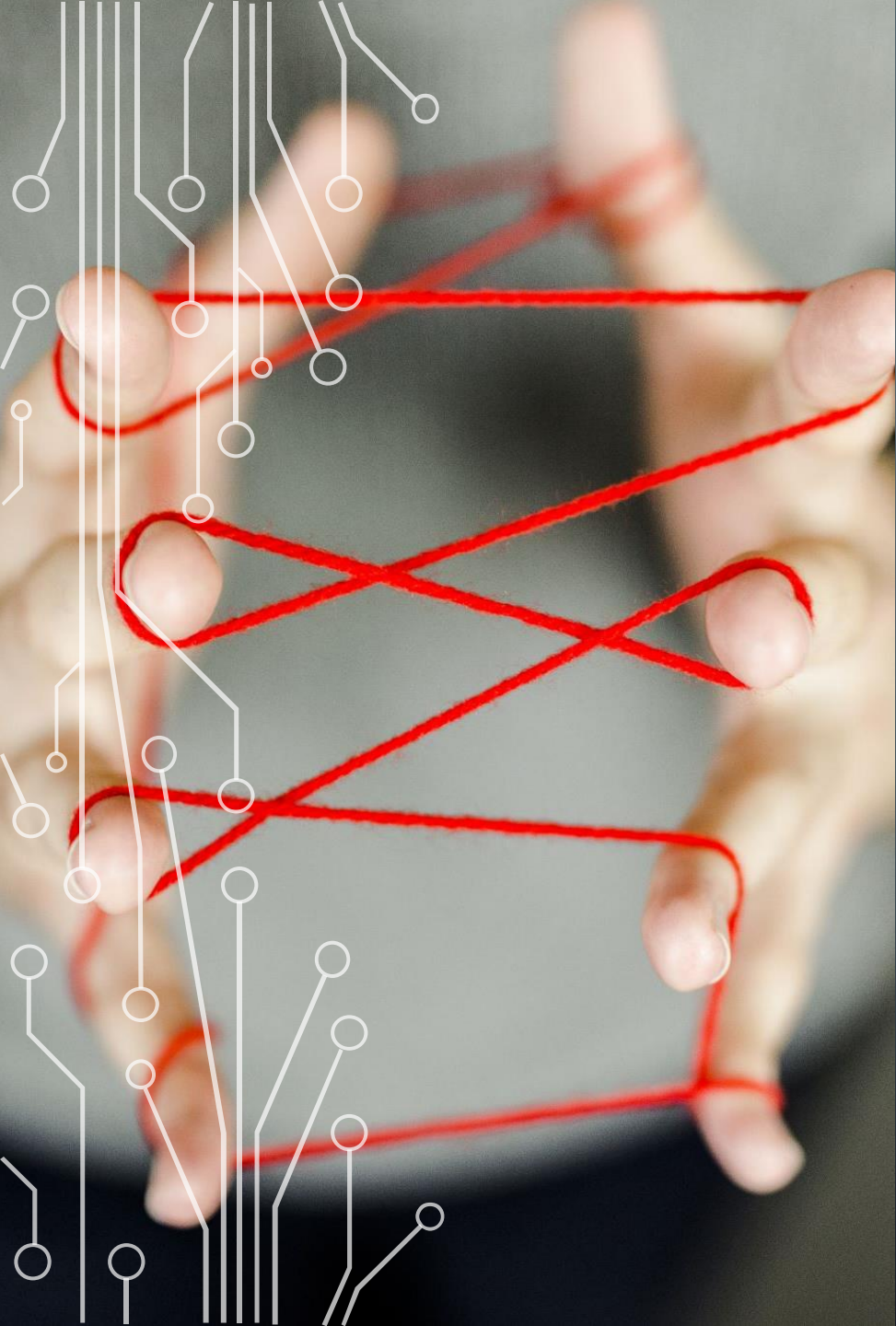
Nociception – the transmission of an action potential in response to a potentially tissue damaging stimulus

Pain – a sensory emotion generated in response to a perception of threat

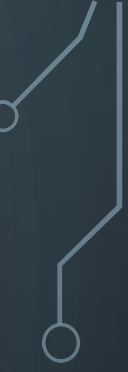


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HOW DO WE MAKE  
SENSE OF PAIN?



# TIME BASED CLASSIFICATIONS OF PAIN

## ACUTE PAIN

- Lasts 6 weeks to 3 months
- Associated with tissue damage and tissue healing processes
- Has an adaptive role

## CHRONIC PAIN

- On most days for >3 months
- chronic pain is not distinguished by its duration but by the inability of the body to achieve normal physiological homeostatic levels” (Loeser & Melzack, 1999)
- Pain which persists after tissue healing has occurred and stimulus has ceased
- Maladaptive – it has outlived its usefulness

# CHRONIC PAIN – WHY 3 MONTHS?

## Tissue healing times

Stage 1 –  
inflammatory phase

• 72hrs to 2 weeks

Stage 2 –  
regeneration phase

• 6 weeks

Stage 3 –  
remodelling phase

• 3 months



The majority of tissues have healed  
by 3 months!

# MECHANISM BASED CLASSIFICATIONS OF PAIN

## NOCICEPTIVE PAIN

Pain that arises from actual or threatened damage to non-neural tissue and is due to the activation of nociceptors.



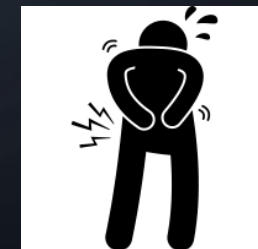
## NEUROPATHIC PAIN

Pain caused by a lesion or disease of the somatosensory nervous system



## NOCIPLASTIC PAIN

Pain that arises from altered nociception despite no clear evidence of actual or threatened tissue damage causing the activation of peripheral nociceptors or evidence for disease or lesion of the somatosensory system causing the pain.



# NOCIPLASTIC/ CHRONIC PAIN CONDITIONS

Chronic low back  
pain

Chronic whiplash

Osteoarthritis pain

Chronic widespread  
pain/fibromyalgia

Irritable bowel  
syndrome

Chronic pelvic pain

Functional  
neurological  
disorders

Temporomandibular  
joint disorder

Tension headaches

Complex regional  
pain syndrome

Phantom limb pain



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## PAIN IS COMMON

80% of people who have had surgery suffer from moderate to severe pain

1 in 5 South Africans lives with chronic pain (Kammerman et al, 2020)

30% of people with diabetes will develop neuropathic pain (Jacovides et al, 2014)



# HOW DOES PAIN AFFECT PEOPLE?

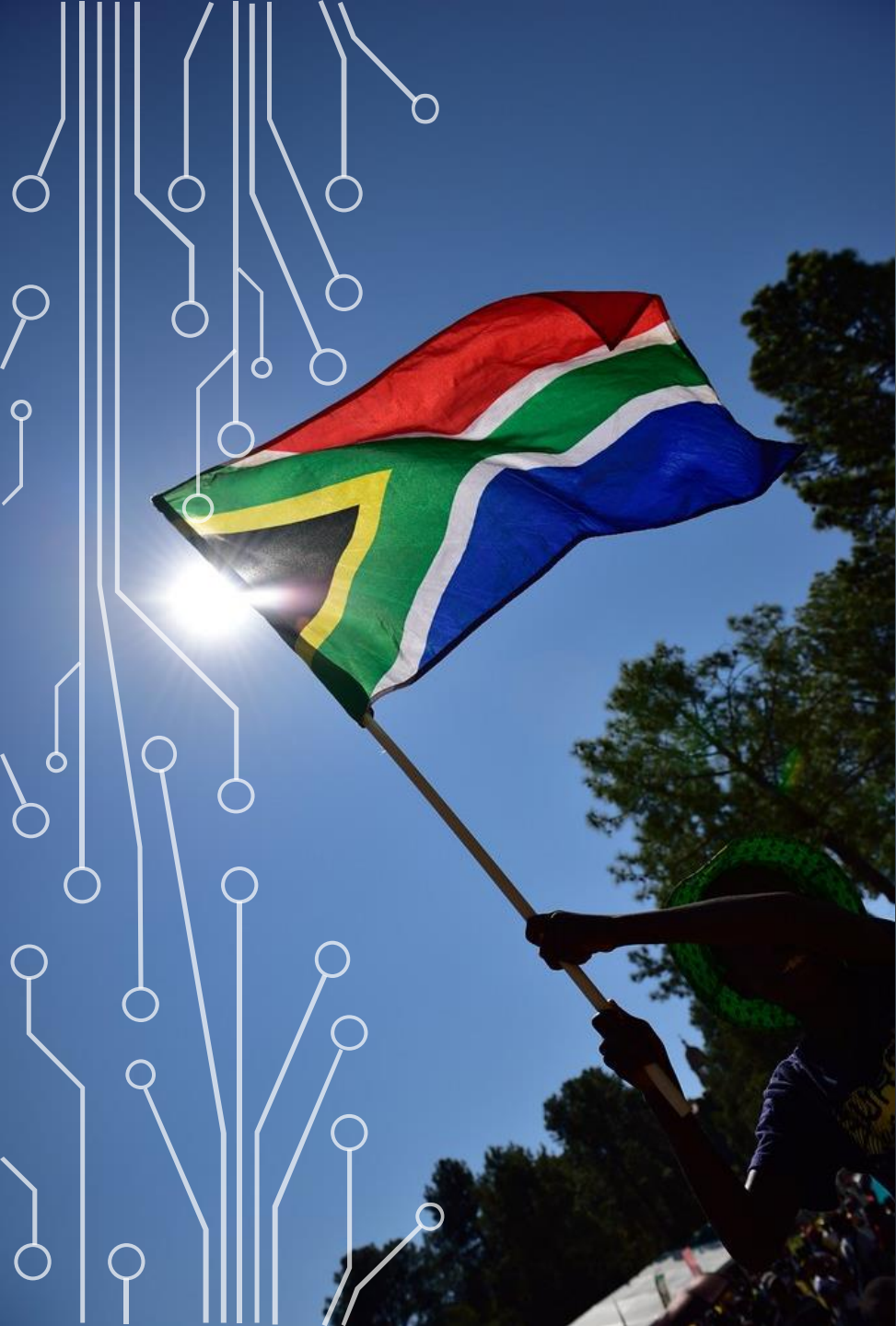






## THE 3 I'S OF PAIN

- Pain..
  - Interrupts
  - Interferes
  - Disrupts our Identity



## SOUTH AFRICANS IN PAIN ARE...

- Withdrawn
- Worried
- Lonely
- Feel judged
- Have no one to talk to
- And feel that no one really understands them

# SOUTH AFRICANS IN PAIN WANT...



SUPPORT AND ACCEPTANCE



TO KNOW WHAT THEY CAN  
DO TO HELP THEMSELVES



HOW CAN  
YOU MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE?



PROVIDE  
EMPATHETIC  
VALIDATION

“I can see you are really suffering”

“I’m so sorry you are experiencing this”

I’m so sorry you are in pain”



## IDENTIFY THE 'THREAT FACTORS'



“WHAT ARE YOU  
AFRAID IS WRONG?”



“WHAT WORRIES YOU  
ABOUT YOUR PAIN?”



# EMPOWER THE PERSON WITH PAIN

- Did you know that the science shows that there are many ways that we can treat pain – not just with medication? Would you like to learn about...
  - Exercise?
  - Mindfulness?
  - Breathing techniques?
  - Sleep hygiene?



## WHEN PEOPLE COME TO US IN PAIN...

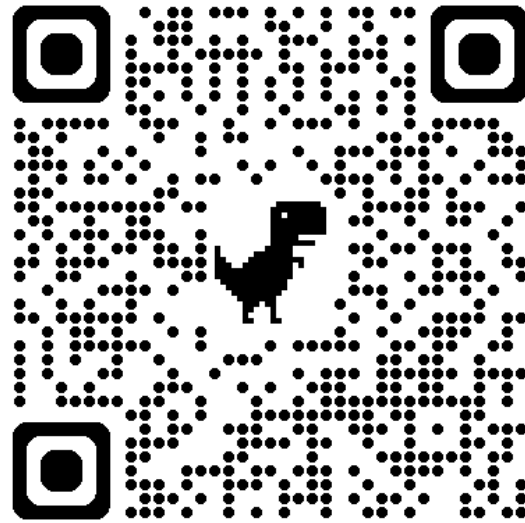
- They need us to
  - Validate it with empathy
  - Recognise that it is interrupting and interfering with their lives and maybe even their identity
  - Empower them to reclaim their lives



# Understanding Pain

Unravelling the physiology, assessment, and management of pain through South African stories

Editors: Romy Parker and Jocelyn Park-Ross



## LEARN MORE ABOUT PAIN

- Postgraduate Diploma in Interdisciplinary Pain Management



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