(See page 40)

Part one

Part two/ three

Part four

Part five

- Q1 (a), (b), (c). The vast majority of cases of back pain are muscular in origin, and active exercise is the primary treatment. A small proportion of back pains are caused by underlying disease, of which in men prostate cancer should not be missed. Paracetamol alone is rarely enough to treat chronic back pain it should be prescribed along with an NSAID (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug).
- Q2 (a), (e). Prostate spinal metastases must be ruled out in an older man with backache for the first time, so a rectal examination and a blood PSA (prostate specific antigen) level are important. Inflammatory joint disease should also be considered. The other conditions in the list are much less frequent.
- Q3 (a), (d), (e), (f), and (g). All these actions are appropriate to begin with. Specialist assessment is not necessary unless the pain is intractable and continuing despite your initial efforts. A spinal X-ray is not indicated until initial treatment has failed and there is good clinical evidence that there may be spinal involvement (which accounts for a very small proportion of cases of back pain).
- Q4 (a), (b), (c). It is common for back pain sufferers to be dispirited and worried by what might be happening to them, so that a thorough explanation of its causes and treatment often helps to raise their mood and to ease their pain accordingly. Guided exercise, especially along with other people, is highly recommended tai chi, for example helps to retrain muscles and improve posture and balance. Manual therapy is only helpful if performed along with an exercise regime. There is no basis for acupuncture, and rest is likely to prolong the chronic problem.
- Q5 (a), (b), (c), and (d). Medicines for neuropathic pain have been shown to help considerably when routine pain management has failed. If that doesn't help then b) and c) can be considered. CBT is often helpful, to help patients to understand their pain and to deal with it rationally and effectively.

Jayanti was given a series of stretching exercises to perform, and his pain receded within a few days. His rectal examination confirmed that his prostate gland was of normal size, smooth and soft, and his PSA was normal at three units. He is back to his normal self.

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