





the patient is not responsible for the presence of pain in his or her life. Patients grappling with chronic pain deserve to be the same respect and dignity as patients dealing with any other medical condition, without either the physician or the medical system creating additional challenges and barriers to treatment options. Inherent in the nuanced art of medicine is individuation of care, with treatment based on the needs of each individual. Without question, part of the responsibility of the physician includes being cognizant of the abusive potential of medications. However, that represents just one

in a list of treatment considerations, and potential for medication abuse does not imply that all patients are engaged in such abuse. The presence of both compassion and awareness allow for a balanced approach to creative treatment that works. There is no substitute for clinical acumen, no heuristic that can adequately replace person-to-person interactions with a skilled and caring physician. Even in the presence of challenges, trust, optimism, and a sense of collaborative willingness can remain an inherent part of our care of patients.