

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Why Where It Hurts Isn't Always Where the Problem Starts

Manhattan Pain Medicine founder Jason W. Siefferman, MD, explains why identifying what hurts is only the first step in understanding why pain develops and persists.



NEW YORK, NY, Date. When something hurts, the natural assumption is that the problem must be located in the same place.

A painful shoulder suggests a shoulder problem. Pelvic pain suggests something within the pelvis. Leg pain suggests something in the leg.

Sometimes that assumption is correct. Sometimes it tells only part of the story.

Jason W. Siefferman, MD, founder and medical director of Manhattan Pain Medicine, believes understanding that distinction can be especially important for patients whose pain persists despite treatment directed precisely where they feel it.

"Where someone hurts matters, but knowing what hurts is only the first step. The deeper question is why that structure hurts, how the problem developed, and what may be causing it to persist."

Dr. Siefferman is triple board-certified in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Pain Medicine, and Headache Medicine. His work frequently involves patients whose symptoms have resisted straightforward anatomical explanations.

When the Obvious Target Is Not the Complete Answer

Determining what is driving pain can require more than identifying an abnormality on a scan or matching a symptom to a body part. Sometimes the painful structure is correctly identified, but the forces or conditions that caused it to become painful remain unaddressed. A clinical evaluation may incorporate the patient's history, physical examination, imaging, movement, symptom patterns, previous treatment responses, diagnostic procedures, and other information.

How those pieces relate can be as important as any one finding.

An imaging abnormality may be clinically important without necessarily explaining every symptom a patient experiences. Treatment directed at a painful area may also be appropriate but produce less improvement than expected. In other cases, the painful structure may be correctly identified while the underlying mechanical, neurologic, inflammatory, or other factors contributing to that pain remain unresolved.

When the clinical response does not match the original expectation, Dr. Siefferman believes the next question should not always be what treatment to add. Sometimes the better question is whether the original explanation should be reconsidered.

“A treatment that does not work the way we expected can still teach us something. That response becomes additional information that should inform what we ask next.”

Discovery Before Assumption

That concept forms part of the Discovery phase at Manhattan Pain Medicine. The practice organizes complex-pain care around Discovery → Treatment → Maintenance.

Discovery focuses on understanding what hurts, why it hurts, how the problem developed, and why it may be persisting, then developing and testing a working clinical explanation that can guide treatment.

The philosophy also appears in Dr. Siefferman's book *Pain, Answered*, which reframes chronic pain as a clinical journey and provides a framework for understanding diagnosis, treatment response, and what should happen when pain does not behave as expected.

The larger educational conversation will continue through *Care Beyond the Pain*, Dr. Siefferman's filmed podcast launched in September 2026. Through conversations with physicians, clinicians, patients, caregivers, healthcare leaders, and other experts, the series will explore the chronic pain journey from multiple perspectives, including diagnosis, treatment, recovery, support, and navigating complex care.

The message for patients is not to distrust their imaging or disregard existing diagnoses. It is simpler: The place that hurts is important. Understanding why it hurts may require looking beyond it.

About Jason W. Siefferman, MD

Jason W. Siefferman, MD, is the founder and medical director of Manhattan Pain Medicine in New York City. He is triple board-certified in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Pain Medicine, and Headache Medicine. His clinical work includes complex chronic pain, headache and facial pain, spine and nerve conditions, pelvic and pudendal neuralgia, hypermobility and instability, and other conditions in which symptoms may cross conventional diagnostic or specialty boundaries. He is the author of *Pain, Answered* and host of *Care Beyond the Pain*.

About Manhattan Pain Medicine

Manhattan Pain Medicine is a multidisciplinary medical practice in New York City focused on the evaluation and management of complex pain. Its clinical model is organized around Discovery, Treatment, and Maintenance, emphasizing diagnostic reasoning, individualized treatment, multidisciplinary collaboration, patient education, and long-term support.

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