

## Northern Colorado Pain Management clinic offers reprieve from chronic pain, treatment resistant depression with intravenous Ketamine

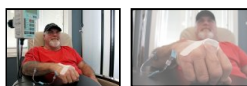
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Darin Stephenson, 52, of Greeley, sits during his intravenous Ketamine treatment at Northern Colorado Pain Management. Ketamine treatments help Stephenson manage the pain caused by a neuromuscular condition.



The pain ruled Darin Stephenson's life for years.

He could barely move. He missed his son's wedding. He had to quit his job.

Stephenson, 52, of Greeley, started having back pain in 2012 after a car crash. Then things got worse.

In 2014, Stephenson developed a neuromuscular disease. Little things like vacuuming the house left him almost paralyzed. Brushing his teeth became a massive feat of endurance. Even after several tissue biopsies, doctors didn't know how to treat the underlying condition. They referred him to Colorado Pain Management, 1175 58th Ave. Suite 101, where he finally found a solution.

The clinic started him on intravenous Ketamine treatments. It's been around since 1962. It's generally used as an anesthetic for minor procedures and a sedative for painful emergency procedures. In recent years, however, it's been used to help manage chronic pain and depression.

The treatment is ongoing, said Jan Gillespie, a pain specialist who owns the clinic. For now, Stephenson comes in once every other month for a three-day infusion of Ketamine. He sits for a couple hours each day, leaves and then returns the next day. Eventually Gillespie hopes to reduce the frequency of the infusions.

Intravenous Ketamine works to address the wind-up phenomenon, Gillespie said, where the brain keeps sending pain signals and amplifying them. Ketamine dampens down that pain signal, Gillespie said. Oral Ketamine does not work as well.

Stephenson said he could function if his pain was at a four on a scale of 10. Without Ketamine treatments, he described his pain as a seven or eight, even with the narcotics doctors prescribe him.

Pain management does not address the underlying conditions causing it, but it's important regardless: Chronic pain is the No. 1 reason for disability and the top reason why people miss work, said Matthew Gray, a pain management specialist with North Colorado Medical Center. Despite this, many folks rely on primary care providers to manage their pain rather than specialists, Gray said.

Pain management specialists have a deeper knowledge of management techniques and can help patients try a variety of treatments, Gray said, "instead of the shotgun approach of increasing opioids."

Gray said he agrees intravenous Ketamine treatments can be beneficial to patients if it's done in a controlled environment.

Gillespie has a background in anesthesiology. She makes sure patients are monitored during the Ketamine treatments and keeps doses low enough to avoid hallucinations.

In the two months since Stephenson began the treatments, he said he hasn't experienced any negative side effects. He's been able to enjoy his life again.

Recently he was able to go to the shooting range and hang out with his sons. He hopes he'll be able to return to the work force soon. He's hopeful he'll be able to cut back on his pain medication, as well.

"There was really nowhere else to go," Stephenson said. "I am very thankful."

— *Kelly Ragan writes features and covers health and nonprofits for The Greeley Tribune. Have a tip? Want to share your story? Call (970) 392-4424, email [kragan@greeleytribune.com](mailto:kragan@greeleytribune.com) (<mailto:kragan@greeleytribune.com>) or connect on Twitter @kelly\_raygun.*

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## ABOUT THE CLINIC

Northern Colorado Pain Management clinic takes patients with and without referrals for intravenous Ketamine treatments to manage chronic pain. It takes patients with referrals for treatment resistant depression. To learn more, call (970) 495-0444 or go to (<http://www.northerncoloradopain.com>)<http://www.northerncoloradopain.com/> (<http://www.northerncoloradopain.com/>).