Chronic pain is an awful, debilitating condition and can seriously impact upon patients’ quality of life. With insufficient systems in place for the management of chronic pain, thousands of patients are left to suffer in silence, either unaware that help is out there, or left feeling helpless after the healthcare system has failed address their pressing needs.

I was deeply saddened to read a story in the news about a man who took his own life after suffering from excruciating toothache. The man in question, Dorian Thomson, a 41-year-old model from Maida Vale, suffered from Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (EDS), an inherited collagen disorder that causes weakened joints and can force sufferers to live in an enormous amount of pain. According to reports, Mr Thomson had previously received failed orthodontic treatment that had in fact exacerbated his condition, leading him to suffer for almost a decade before he finally took his own life.

As soon as I read this story, my first thought was how could we, as a caring profession have let down somebody in so much pain that they eventually committed suicide? Naturally it would seem Mr Thomson’s relatives are calling for an investigation into this matter, although I do suspect that the orthodontic treatment is something of a red herring. What this story does highlight however is the very poor availability of access to chronic pain centres.

As a specialist endodontist, I treat pain on a daily basis and am very much aware of the debilitating impact pain can have on my patients’ lives. Strangely, at EndoCare we did actually treat a similar case to Mr Thomson’s a little while back. Like Mr Thomson, the patient was a tall, thin model and also

Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (EDS) can force sufferers to live in pain.

As dentists we work for the common good - we work to relieve our patients’ pain and improve oral health.
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Dr Michael Sultan BDS MSc FICD is a Specialist in Endodontics and the Clinical Director of EndoCare. Michael qualified at Bristol University in 1986. He worked as a general dental practitioner for 5 years before commencing specialist studies at Guy's hospital, London. He completed his MSc in Endodontics in 1993 and worked as an in-house Endodontist in various practices before setting up in Harley St, London in 2000. He was admitted onto the specialist register in Endodontics in 1999 and has lectured extensively to postgraduate dental groups as well as lecturing on Endodontic courses at Eastman CFD, University of London. He has been involved with numerous dental groups and has been chairman of the Alpha Omega dental fraternity. In 2008 he became clinical director of EndoCare, a group of specialist practices. For further information please call EndoCare on 020 7224 0999 or visit www.endocare.co.uk

Chronic pain can have a negative impact on patient's daily life.