

# Client Alert

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## Does Your Client Suffer From RSD Without Knowing It?

By RONALD P. GOLDFADEN

Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy (RSD) is a chronic pain disorder that may affect millions of Americans. Also known as Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS), the syndrome is a malfunction of the nervous system. It normally begins with an injury that does not heal as it should or with pain and/or swelling that is more severe than would be expected by the injury that caused it.

RSD can result from something as traumatic as a gunshot wound, or as minor as a sprained ankle. Surgery and accidents have also been known to cause the syndrome. Whatever the trigger, the injury seems to rewire the sympathetic nervous system, which regulates skin temperature and blood flow to the limbs. As a result, the affected limb feels burning hot and can turn shiny red, or become cool and bluish. Sweating, swelling, muscle spasms, and sensitivity to touch are also common symptoms.

Diagnosing RSD is difficult, partly because not all patients have the same signs or symptoms. Unfortunately, there is no single laboratory test to diagnose RSD. A physician must make a clinical diagnosis by obtaining a patient's history, performing a thorough examination, and excluding other diseases. Although early diagnosis dramatically improves the chances of remission, sufferers of RSD are often not diagnosed until the syndrome has become a persistent state. Sadly, the disease may progress with time to other parts of the body. Furthermore, as the disease progresses, it can become more painful. Patients have compared the pain to that of a ruptured disk or childbirth.

Just as there is no one standard for diagnosis of RSD, there is also no standard for treatment. Still, several

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### Some Facts About RSD

- [1] chronic pain disorder affecting millions
- [2] may begin with injury to hand or foot
- [3] pain and or swelling more severe than expected
- [4] symptoms vary, rendering diagnosis difficult
- [5] early detection improves chances of remission

### Symptoms of RSD

- [1] burning pain
- [2] inflammation
- [3] blood vessel spasm
- [4] loss of motor function
- [5] muscle spasms
- [6] changes in skin temperature and color
- [7] emotional disturbance
- [8] insomnia

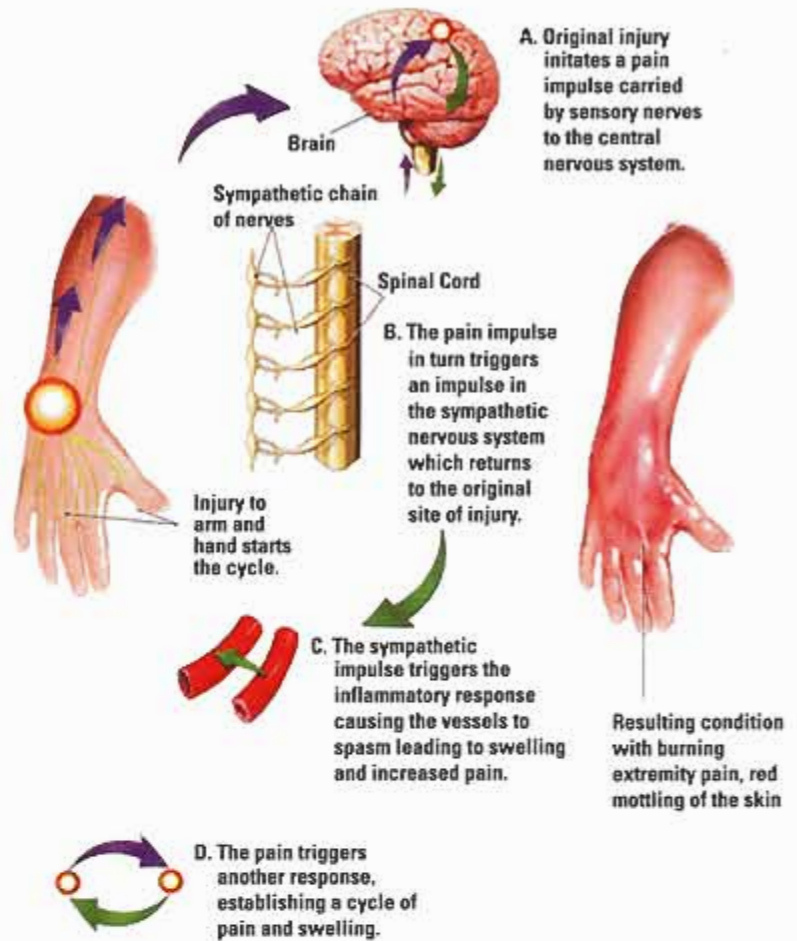
options are available, and research is being done to find more effective treatments and a cure. Some patients have success with anti-inflammatories, physical therapy, and pain medication, including opioids. Other treatments may include nerve blocks and spinal cord stimulators. Treatment is highly individualized and may involve many different healthcare providers.

Blume Goldfaden has experience handling the complexities of an RSD injury case. We understand how physically and emotionally disabling the disease can be for the patient and his or her family. Because the very definition of the disease includes severe pain that is disproportionate to the initial trauma, patients are often thought to be exaggerators or malingerers. This only compounds the suffering RSD patients have to endure.

If you have any clients who may suffer from RSD, please consider referring them to our firm. We are committed to helping those who have suffered the grief, pain, and anger of being stricken with RSD.

For more information on RSD, visit [www.rsd.org](http://www.rsd.org).

## Mechanism of RSD



*If you or anyone you know has experienced an injury, please feel free to speak with one of us. We will be happy to help you in any way we can.*

*Blume Goldfaden is always there to share our expertise with our extended family, friends, and clients.*

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