



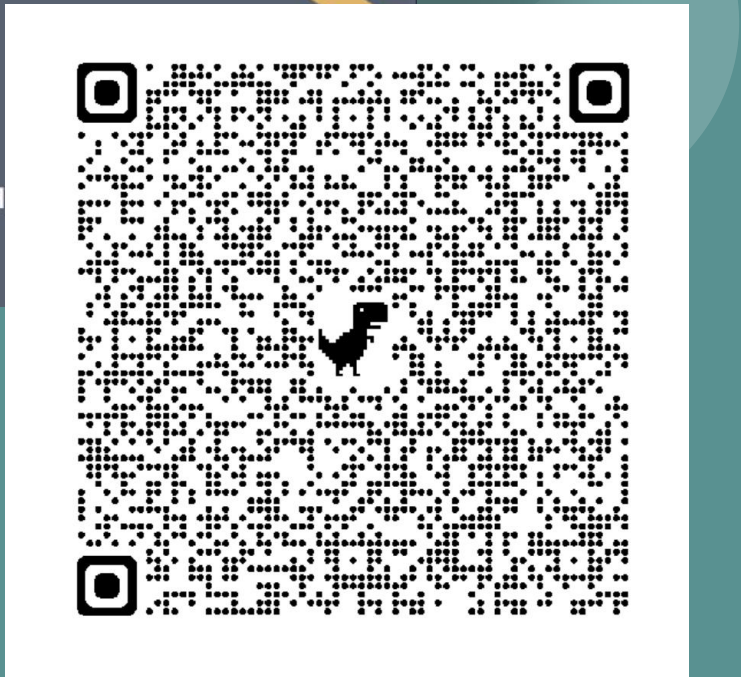
Dr. Amr Moneib
M.B.B.ch. M.Sc. MRCOG
Senior registrar ST7 Obstetrics and Gynecology
Endometriosis and reproductive medicine team
Cambridge University Hospitals



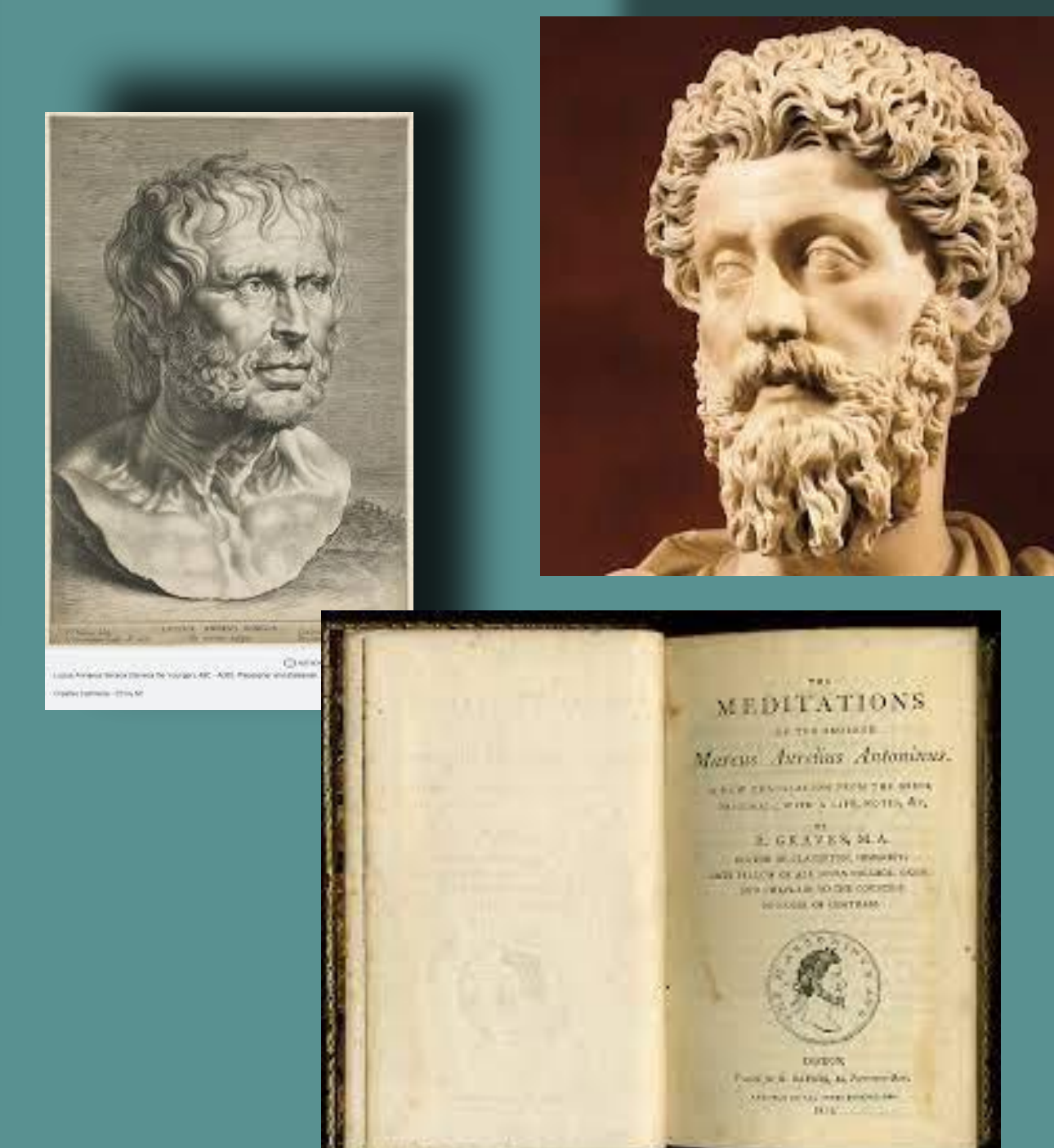
Scan this to go to
Endosketch.co.uk



To download
Endosketch
From Google play store
Scan this code



ACT



Objective: To demonstrate the use of stoic principles to address chronic pain conditions.

Chronic pain conditions can be debilitating and affect the quality of life of many sufferers. Conditions like endometriosis, bladder pain syndrome, irritable bowel syndrome, fibromyalgia and migraines can occur on their own but in many cases can present as multiple factors behind the pain. Diagnosis of these conditions is not easy and controversial. While a physical cause can eventually be found, sometimes even removing that either surgically or medically does not solve the problem. Recurrence can explain late presentation of the same symptoms. However, sometimes there is no period of improved symptoms at all after the initial treatment. Neuropathic pain can explain some of these situations. A psychological effect of having such debilitating conditions is usually ignored. Some doctors fear addressing these issues as it might be misunderstood by patients as disbelief and ignoring the physical cause of their suffering. Explaining the physiology of pain pathways and the interpretation by the brain is essential here.

Stoicism is an ancient Greek philosophy that teaches one's coming in terms with nature. The concept of "**Amor fati**" or love of fact is very similar to the bases of **Acceptance and commitment therapy** that can be very essential in patients with chronic pain conditions. Stoicism teaches that while we can not control everything around us we can only control our reaction to what is happening there and now. That opens the door to the importance of teaching of self help techniques like stretching, breathing exercises and mindfulness. Neuroplasticity is another feature of our brains of getting adapted to repeated situations. While this helps us with our daily routines it unfortunately makes us hypervigilant and on high alert to stressors and pains. Brain training can be helpful to address these issues. **Addressing patients expectations honestly** from the start is of paramount importance. Stoicism teaches that expecting that worse things can happen may help improve our resilience to hardships. This concept is referred to as **premeditatio malorum** in stoic writings. This might not work for all. We come from different cultures, beliefs and educational backgrounds. The one size fit all plan does not work anymore. Our job as doctors is to explore the patient wishes and to try tailoring the best possible plan.