

# Pain Relief Connection

The Pain Information Newsletter

Provided by MGH Cares About Pain Relief



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## Clinical Focus: Ten Guidelines for Assessing and Treating Pain

Over the next several issues principles and guidelines for pain management will be highlighted. Unnecessary pain interferes with patients' well-being and recovery from illness. With proper management, most patients can achieve reasonable comfort and even be free of pain. Consistently following the guidelines across all care settings and populations will dramatically decrease patient suffering and increase the satisfaction of professional care providers.

### 1. Pain is a subjective phenomenon; believe the patient

- Pain is a complex physical, emotional, psychological, and cultural/social experience
- Minority patients, women, elders, and small children are particularly susceptible to under treatment of pain: beware your assumptions about their pain
- Educate patients and families to report pain and to expect relief; treat the worry as well as the discomfort.
- Elicit the meaning of the pain to the patient

### 2. Assess the pain carefully and reassess regularly

- Pain cannot be objectively measured. The best we can do is to quantify severity and to characterize etiology by the patient's description of the pain.
- Vital signs and informally identified behavioral cues are not reliable indicators of pain severity. For neonates and adults who are comatose or cognitively impaired, there are validated behavioral pain assessment tools available that should be consistently used
- Characterize the pain meticulously, including interference with sleep and daily activities
- Make a diagnosis: specific pains respond to specific treatments
- Make pain "visible" as the 5th vital sign; use a 0 - 10 scale (0 = no pain, 10 = worst imaginable) or an age-appropriate tool such as the Faces Scale; be consistent; have everyone use the same pain language

## In the News

The [American Academy of Pain Medicine](#) and [The National Pain Foundation](#) (not to be confused with the [American Pain Foundation](#)) have announced the first annual [National Pain Awareness Week](#), to be observed this year Feb 28 – Mar 3. More information is available on their web sites. We learned of National Pain Awareness Week too late to do much at an institutional level, but next year MGH Cares about Pain Relief will participate in the observance.

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*MGH Cares About Pain Relief*

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To be added to or removed from the *Pain Relief Connection* mailing list, send an email to [PainRelief@Partners.org](mailto:PainRelief@Partners.org)

## Journal Watch

The *Journal of Palliative Medicine*, accessible online from Treadway, is a regular source of pain-related, peer reviewed articles. In the current issue: Lasch K, Greenhill A, et al, **“Why Study Pain? A Qualitative Analysis of Medical and Nursing Faculty and Students' Knowledge of and Attitudes to Cancer Pain Management;”** and Bruera E & Sweeney C, **“Methadone Use In Cancer Patients with Pain: A Review.”** *Journal of Palliative Medicine* Vol 5(1) Jan - Feb 2002.

## Online Resources

An excellent source of articles, educational materials, and clinical tools related to pain and palliative care is the [City of Hope Pain/Palliative Care Resource Center Website](#). Started in 1995 as the Mayday Pain Resource Center, the name and scope have recently been changed to reflect the growing interest in palliative and end-of-life care. If you have a pain-related project, this is a great place to start. Most materials listed are available directly from the Center for a modest postage and handling fee.

## Education

August 21-25 (Weds – Sat): **Advanced Training in Pediatric End-of-Life Care:** The University of New England (Portland, ME) has partnered with the Jason Program to sponsor a five-day workshop series that will cover a variety of topics related to the unique skills necessary to providing quality care and support to terminally ill children, their families and caregivers. For more information, Phone: 207-797-7688, ext. 4412; Fax: 207-878-4891; email: oce@une.edu

Purdue Pharma has an MNA-approved **Pain Assessment Inservice** for nurses. This presentation will review basic pain assessment and documentation techniques as recommended by JCAHO for hospital accreditation. 1.2 CEU's will be awarded to nurses. Please contact Amy Prasol, Purdue Pharma LP, (800)745 -7445 ext 1030810 or email aprasol@aol.com.

## MGH Pain Calendar

February 19, 1 – 2pm (Tuesday): **“Pain Management” Drop-in Workshop** with Annabel Edwards, Clinical Nurse Specialist in the MGH Pain Center. This is a program for patients and families sponsored by The HOPES Program. LOCATION: Cancer Resource Room, first floor of Cox building.

March 20: **Pain Pulse**—MGH’s annual “snap shot” of the state of pain throughout the institution—stay tuned for more information.

March 25, 8 – 11am or 12 – 3pm (offered twice the same day): **“Care of the Patient at the End of Life: Clinical and Ethical Considerations.”** Includes pain management, spirituality, patient and family coping strategies. Wellman Conference Room. Register through the Center for Clinical and Professional Development, 645 Founders, 617-726-3111.

April 16 – 17 (Tues-Weds): **“Pain Relief Champions Course.”** 2-day course open to all MGH clinicians who want to improve knowledge and skills in caring for people with pain and who want to be change agents and resources to other clinicians. LOCATION: Holiday Inn on Blossom Street. Register through the Center for Clinical and Professional Development, 645 Founders, 617-726-3111. Contact Tom Quinn at MGH Cares About Pain Relief for further information.

URL notes: Hold your cursor over the link for a second to see the URL. If you are reading this in hard copy, this month’s links are:  
City of Hope Pain/Palliative Care Resource Center Website: <http://www.cityofhope.org/prc/web/>  
American Academy of Pain Medicine: <http://www.painmed.org>  
National Pain Foundation: <http://www.painconnection.org>  
National Pain Awareness Week: <http://www.painconnection.org/nationalpainawarenessweek>  
American Pain Foundation: <http://www.painfoundation.com/default.asp>

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