

Pain Relief Connection

The Pain Information Newsletter

Provided by MGH Cares About Pain Relief



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In this issue:

Clinical Focus	Page 1
In the News	Page 1
Education	Page 2
MGH Pain Calendar	Page 2
New Feature: Pain Topics—Starting next month on Page 3	

Clinical Focus: Ten Guidelines for Assessing and Treating Pain

This is the 4th in a series on the principles and guidelines for pain management.

5. Anticipate and treat side effects of analgesics

- Opioid receptors in the GI tract are the cause of the most common side effect of opioids: constipation. Every patient with a prescription for opioids should be considered at very high risk for developing constipation and a bowel regimen should be a routine part of pain management with opioids. Bulk laxatives (ex., Metamucil[®]) are contraindicated for many people taking opioids, especially chronically, because the hypoperistaltic large intestine reabsorbs fluid, causing hard stools and constipation. Stimulant laxatives, possibly supplemented with stool softeners, are more effective for prophylaxis and treatment of constipation. Clinical Practice Committees should consider developing algorithms for prevention and treatment of constipation in both inpatient and outpatient settings. Clear written instructions should be prepared for patients at discharge or in the outpatient setting.
- Nausea and sometimes vomiting may be experienced in opioid naïve patients who are placed on a short course of an opioid. The nausea usually dissipates within a few days, but anti-emetics may be indicated. Certain sensitive individuals may re-experience nausea with each dose increase. Converting to a different opioid drug may be helpful in these patients.
- Some patients may experience drowsiness and other CNS effects. Like nausea, the patient will develop tolerance to this side effect while still experiencing the analgesic effect. However, safety measures to protect the patient from falling or preventing the use of dangerous equipment should be instituted. In rare instances psychostimulants may be needed to counter the drowsiness.
- Itching is caused by opioid-induced histamine release. A short course of low dose antihistamines, such as diphenhydramine, may be needed until the itching subsides. Converting to a different opioid is occasionally required.
- If side effects persist or are intractable to standard treatment, a referral to the [MGH Pain Service](#) or the [MGH Palliative Care Service](#) may be indicated.

In the News

Congratulations to Thoracic Oncology: The Thoracic Oncology team in the MGH Cancer Center has been invited to the JCAHO Leadership Summit on Pain Management in San Francisco in October. Barbara Cashavelly and Jennifer Tenhover will represent the team, present their pain assessment project in a poster session, and participate in a Round Table discussion.

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To be added to or removed from the *Pain Relief Connection* mailing list, send an email to PainRelief@Partners.org

Web site preview: The MGH Cares About Pain Relief [web site](#) will be launched before Memorial Day. Readers of *Pain Relief Connection* have the opportunity to preview the pre-launch version. There is no such thing as a completed web site: they require constant review and updating. Comments and suggestions are encouraged at PainRelief@Partners.org.

New Geriatric Pain Guidelines: The [American Geriatrics Society](#) has released its latest practice guideline, "The Management of Persistent Pain in Older Persons," an update of guidelines first published in 1998. The [Executive Summary](#) is currently available online, and the entire guideline will be published in the June 2002 issue of the [Journal of the American Geriatrics Society](#).

AJN Palliative Care Series: This month the [American Journal of Nursing](#) inaugurates a bimonthly series on palliative nursing. Each CE article will be available on the AJN and [NursingCenter](#) web sites. The first article is "[An Overview of Palliative Nursing Care](#)." There is also an accompanying editorial, "Are We Specializing in Neglect?" available through OVID when logged into an MGH computer. The series is edited by Betty Ferrell and Nessa Coyle, both of whom have been international leaders in pain management for many years. They are the co-editors of the [Textbook of Palliative Nursing](#).

Education

June 20 – 22 (Thurs – Sat): **New England Conference on Pediatric Hospice:** Sponsored by the [Jason Program](#), dedicated to the care of seriously ill and dying children. An annual multidisciplinary conference. Register online, or print registration form to mail or fax. Phone number for more information: (207) 283-0170 ext 2589.

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

September 19 – 22 (Thurs – Sun): **4th Biennial Forum on Pediatric Pain, The Context of Pediatric Pain: Biology, Family, Society, Culture:** White Point Beach Resort, Nova Scotia, Canada. Additional information is available on their web site or by calling 902-453-4664.

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:

June 26 (Weds): **Neonatal and Infant Pain Assessment:** A 4-hour continuing education course co-sponsored by the NICU and the Center for Clinical and Professional Development. Time and Location to be announced. Faculty are Pat Hummel, MA, RNC, NNP, PNP and Mary Puchalski, MS, RNC, APN of Loyola University Medical Center near Chicago. They are the developers of the Neonatal Pain Agitation and Sedation Scale (N-PASS). Target audience is all practitioners who work with children up to 3 years old.

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:
MGH Cares About Pain Relief: http://www.massgeneral.org/marketinghome/diana/mghpain_home.htm (this is a temporary URL)
American Geriatrics Society: <http://www.americangeriatrics.org>
Executive Summary of geriatric guidelines: http://www.americangeriatrics.org/education/executive_summ.shtml
Journal of the American Geriatrics Society: <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/Journals/issuelist.asp?journal=jgs>
Jason Program: <http://www.jasonprogram.org>
4th Biennial Forum on Pediatric Pain: <http://www.pediatric-pain.ca/ifpp>
American Journal of Nursing: <http://www.ajnonline.com>
NursingCenter: <http://www.nursingcenter.com/home/index.asp>
Textbook of Palliative Nursing: <http://www.oup-usa.com/search/jsp/docread.jsp?k2dockey=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.oup-usa.org%2Fisbn%2F0195135741.html%40oup&querytext=ferrell>
"An Overview of Palliative Nursing Care:" <http://ipsapp006.lwwonline.com/content/getfile/5562/7/18/fulltext.htm>
MGH Pain Service: <http://www.mgh.harvard.edu/paincenter>
MGH Palliative Care Service: http://www.massgeneral.org/palliativecare/palliative_home.htm

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