

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

This is the 7th in a series on the principles and guidelines for pain management.

8. Use adjuvant medications to supplement opioids

Opioids are usually the most important medications used in the treatment of pain, especially moderate to severe pain. In addition, adjuvant medications (sometimes referred to as “co-analgesics”) are frequently indicated. It should be stressed that adjuvants should generally not be used *instead* of opioids, but to *supplement* opioids.

- Neuropathic pain (described as burning, electric, stabbing, paroxysmal) may respond to tricyclic antidepressants (e.g., desipramine) or anticonvulsants (e.g., gabapentin; carbamazepine).
- Bone pain, such as that resulting from primary or metastatic cancer, tends to respond well to nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory agents (NSAIDs), steroids, and bisphosphonates. Primary treatment of the tumor by radiation therapy or chemotherapy should be strongly considered.
- Pain associated with swelling (e.g., intracranial tumor-related edema; pressure on the liver capsule) may respond to glucocorticosteroids. Note that in published guidelines, glucocorticosteroids are not recommended in the management of head injury.
- In advanced cancer or AIDS, psychostimulants (e.g., methylphenidate) may enhance pain relief while reducing drowsiness and improving mood, energy, and appetite.

9. Base analgesic and other interventions on underlying pathology and specific pain syndromes

- If an underlying cause for the pain (e.g., trauma; infection; tumor) can be identified, both the pain and the underlying cause should be treated concurrently.
- Pain can be classified in multiple overlapping categories. Appropriate selection of these categories during the assessment/diagnosis process will greatly assist in treatment planning and follow up. Examples of categories include:
 - Acute, chronic nonmalignant, or malignant pain (associated with life-limiting illnesses such as cancer and AIDS)
 - Nociceptive vs neuropathic pain
 - Somatic vs visceral pain
 - Continuous, recurrent intermittent, incident, or breakthrough pain
 - End-of-life pain

In the News

The [American Chronic Pain Association](#) has taken the lead in forming a new pain consortium, Partners for Understanding Pain. 45 professional and advocacy groups have joined the consortium. One of their

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first projects has been to designate September as Pain Awareness Month. The press release announcing the group's formation reads in part: "The Partners for Understanding Pain will work to build understanding that pain is a serious public health issue. They will target health care professionals, legislators, individuals with pain and their families, and the general public with their campaign." The press release also includes a reminder that Congress has declared the decade beginning January 1, 2001 the "Decade of Pain Control and Research."

Speaking of advocacy, the [Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association](#) has developed a [Pain Control Advocacy Toolkit](#). This online booklet has advice, sample letters, and examples from other advocacy groups on how to make more visible and audible the voices of people campaigning for those in pain.

The U.S. Senate is in the early stages of developing legislation that could one day mandate JCAHO-like standards (e.g., patients have a right to adequate pain assessment and appropriate treatment) for federal health care facilities.

Education

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.

October 3-5 (Thurs – Sat) (Please note that this reflects a schedule change): **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.

The [Oncology Nursing Society](#) is sponsoring a free "**Priority Symptom Management (PRISM) Webcast Series.**" Each session lasts one hour and provides a live interactive presentation by a recognized nurse specialist and provides 1 continuing education contact hour. The session on **cancer pain** is scheduled for 1:00pm on Weds October 30. Pre-registration is required for the site, but an unlimited number of people may attend. To register and to see other offerings, log on to www.commpartners.com/ons.

MGH Pain Calendar:

Educational Offerings and Events Calendar of The Center for Clinical and Professional Development is now available [online](#).

September 25 (Weds) 8:00am – 4:00pm: [Conversations at the End of Life](#). Topics to be covered include pain and symptom management; ethical issues, struggles, and choices; patient advocacy; and cultural differences. 8.4 contact hours will be awarded. Pre-register by calling the [Center for Clinical and Professional Development](#) at 617-726-3111. Location: Charles River Plaza, 185 Cambridge Street, 2nd floor Room 105.

October 25 (Fri) 8:00am – 6:00pm: **Weaving End-of-Life Care into Nursing Education.** Instruction in the practical application of the [Toolkit for Nurturing Excellence at End-of-Life Transition \(TNEEL\)](#). Sponsored by the [MGH Institute for Health Professions](#). Location: IHP at Charlestown Navy Yard. Brochure and registration form are on the IHP web site.

November 15 (Fri) 8:00am – 11:00am; repeated 12:00N – 3:00pm: [Care of the Patient at the End of Life: Clinical and Ethical Considerations](#). Pre-register by calling the [Center for Clinical and Professional Development](#) at 617-726-3111. Location: Charles River Plaza, 185 Cambridge Street, 2nd floor Room 105.

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:

Jason Program: <http://www.jasonprogram.org>

4th Biennial Forum on Pediatric Pain: <http://www.pediatric-pain.ca/ifpp>

Center for Clinical & Professional Development:

<http://pcs.mgh.harvard.edu/CCPD/CCPDframe/page%20descriptions/CCPD%20Offerings%20Home%20Page.htm>

American Chronic Pain Association: <http://www.theacpa.org>

Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association: <http://www.hpna.org>

Pain Control Advocacy Toolkit: <http://www.hpna.org/paincontrol.htm>

Oncology Nursing Society: <http://www.ons.org>

MGH Institute for Health Professions: <http://www.mghihp.edu>

TNEEL: <http://www.son.washington.edu/departments/bnhs/pain>

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