

Pain Relief Connection

The Pain Information Newsletter

Provided by MGH Cares About Pain Relief



Archived issues are available at <http://www.MassGeneral.org/PainRelief>

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In the News

- MGH Cares About Pain Relief has a new “home” in Patient Care Services (PCS). Effective October 1, MGH absorbed the pain education and advocacy program that has been supported by a series of grants from the [Mayday Fund](#), a private philanthropic foundation, since 1999. For the present, Tom Quinn, Project Director for MGH Cares About Pain Relief, will continue to be located in office space donated by the Palliative Care Service, but will be reporting to Jackie Somerville, Associate Chief Nurse, and strengthening relationships within PCS. Tom will be working closely with the re-energized Pain Task Force as well as developing educational programs and facilitating unit-based projects and initiatives. As an institution, we are very grateful for the multi-year support provided by the Mayday Fund, and pleased that MGH will be able to continue the important work of this initiative.
- A presentation at the [American Academy of Family Physicians 2003 Scientific Assembly](#) revealed that [half of elderly patients with painful neuropathy receive inappropriate analgesics](#), based on the latest [American Geriatric Society Guidelines](#) (full text available free via [Magic](#) on MGH computers). The most commonly prescribed analgesic was propoxyphene (Darvon and Darvocette). “Studies suggest that its efficacy is similar to that of aspirin or acetaminophen alone, but drug accumulation, neuroexcitatory effects, and ataxia or dizziness may add unnecessary morbidity in older patients.” There is also a risk of cardiotoxicity related to accumulation of the neurotoxic metabolite, norpropoxyphene. Tricyclic antidepressants, effective for some neuropathic pain conditions, may have unacceptable anticholinergic side effects in elderly patients.
- The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) recently sponsored a scientific conference, Cellular Biology of Addiction. The [San Diego Union Tribune](#) reported: “Drug addiction, the researchers agreed, should be treated like a chronic disease, such as diabetes or asthma, rather than as a moral failing. (Drug addiction has no social or economic boundaries, either. Conservative radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh recently admitted he was addicted to painkillers and checked himself into a 30-day drug rehab program.) ‘The goal is to crack the addiction code – and the code lies in the basic working of the brain,’ said Dr. George Augustine, a researcher at Duke University Medical Center. ‘We don’t know how (addiction) happens. It’s been a complete black box until recently. Now, there’s a crack of light.’” Dr. Hans Breiter, a psychiatrist and an expert on brain imaging at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, “predicts a new generation of drugs will ‘target the malfunctions of brain circuitry that lead to the problems.’”

Medication Safety

Elan Pharmaceuticals, distributor of a concentrated oral morphine solution (Roxanol, 20 mg/ml), recently sent a letter to physicians warning them about unsafe prescribing of oral solutions. They reported: “serious adverse events and deaths have resulted from accidental overdose of high concentration morphine sulfate oral solutions. In most of these cases, morphine oral solutions ordered in *milligrams (mg)* were mistakenly interchanged for *milliliters (mL)* of the product, resulting in 20-fold overdoses. For example, a prescribed dose of 5 mg was mistakenly administered as 5 mL (100 mg) of the morphine sulfate concentrated solution.” They also pointed out that there are morphine oral solutions of varying concentrations on the market. At MGH there is only one concentration, 2 mg/ml (10

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mg/5mL). The error described above has much less risk associated at this concentration. However, to reduce the risk of confusing dose and volume when prescribing and dispensing oral solutions, 2 critical pieces of information should always be included in the order/prescription:

- Concentration of the solution (expressed in mg/mL);
- Intended dose (expressed in mg) *and* the corresponding volume (expressed in mL)

This information should also be taught to home care patients, and they should be instructed in the use of appropriate measuring devices, not the standard kitchen teaspoon or table spoon.

Pain Education on the Web

- [Cancer Pain Management and Resources](#)—[Nursing Center](#): 2.0 ANCC-approved contact hours; \$12.95
- [Pediatric Pain: Selected Research Topics](#)—[Nursing Center](#): 2.5 ANCC-approved contact hours; \$15.95
- The [Initiative for Pediatric Palliative Care](#) (IPPC) has launched a free online curriculum. The [pain module](#) is the first to be released.
- [Breakthrough Pain](#)—Medscape: 1 category 1 CME; free (industry-sponsored)

Pain-Related Education Opportunities

Nov 4 & 5 (Tue-Wed) **End of Life: A Map for Uncharted Terrain**. Marlborough, MA. Includes several pain-related presentations. May attend either/both days. Contact Hospice & Palliative Care Federation of Massachusetts: 781-255-7077.

Nov 6, 2003 (Thurs) **Pain: Contemporary Medical, Behavioral Health, and Legal Issues**. Sponsored by Baystate Health System, Dept of Anesthesia and Academic Affairs. Location: Log Cabin, Holyoke, MA. Contact: Marion.Chartier@BHS.org. 413-794-3466. Web site: www.baystatehealth.com/learn. Online registration available.

Nov 6 – 7 (Thurs – Fri) **State of the Art Conference on Pediatric Palliative Care**. Sponsored by [Initiative for Pediatric Palliative Care](#). [Online registration](#) available.

MGH Pain Calendar

Nov 7 (Fri) 8:30am – 4:00pm **End of Life Nursing Education Curriculum (ELNEC)**, Part 1 Nov 7, Part 2 Nov 21 (Monday). Pre-registration is required through [The Center for Clinical & Professional Development](#) by calling (617) 726-3111. Registration Fees (each day): Free for MGH Employees and Students, \$30 for Partners Employees, \$60 for all others.

Nov 10 (Mon) 11:00am – 12:00N Conversations About Cancer Pain (for patients and families) Cancer resource Room, Cox 1st floor. Sponsored by HOPES Program.

March 18 – 19, 2004 (Thurs – Fri) 8:00am – 4:30pm **Pain Relief Champions** course. Open to all disciplines. CE/CME/CPE will be available. Free to MGH and Shriners clinicians; \$60 for other Partners clinicians, \$120 for all others. Must attend both days. Stay tuned 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:

Previous issues of *Pain Relief Connection*: <http://www.massgeneral.org/painrelief/Newsletter>

Mayday Fund: <http://www.painandhealth.org/mayday/mayday-home.html>

Center for Clinical & Prof. Dev.: http://pcs.mgh.harvard.edu/CCPD/Educational_Offerings/cpd_offerings_calendar.asp

PCS Pain Resource Center: http://pcs.mgh.harvard.edu/Secure/Clinical_Resources/Pain_Resources.asp

American Academy of Family Physicians 2003 Scientific Assembly: <http://www.medscape.com/viewprogram/2682>

American Geriatric Society Pain Guidelines: <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/links/doi/10.1046/j.1532-5415.50.6s.1.x/full>

Magic—Treadwell Library's electronic catalog: <http://magic.mgh.harvard.edu>

Medscape (free registration required): <http://www.medscape.com>

Medscape painful neuropathy & elders article: <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/462591>

San Diego Union Tribune: http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/science/20031022-9999_mz1c22brain.html

Nursing Center: <http://www.nursingcenter.com/home/index.asp>

Cancer Pain Management and Resources: http://www.nursingcenter.com/prodev/ce_article.asp?tid=422938

Pediatric Pain: Selected Research Topics: http://www.nursingcenter.com/prodev/ce_article.asp?tid=422590

Initiative for Pediatric Palliative Care: <http://www.ippcweb.org>

IPPC Pain Module: <http://www.ippcweb.org/module2.asp>

IPPC Pediatric Palliative Care Conference registration <http://www.nyam.org/events/pediatrics/registration.html>

Medscape breakthrough pain CME: <http://www.medscape.com/viewprogram/2667>

Hospice and Palliative Care Federation of Massachusetts: <http://www.hospicefed.org>

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