A team explored the current best practices for geriatric pain assessment, which included an evaluation of assessment tools with regard to effectiveness and appropriateness for geriatric use.

Pain control is an important quality of life factor for geriatric patients, and it affects patients' satisfaction with care. As such, effective pain control is a critical initiative for healthcare providers.

The promotion of comfort and relief of pain is essential to nursing practice. A consistent, proactive approach should be taken to assess older adults for pain. Literature suggests that incorporation of multidimensional facets of pain assessment and management provides best care and improves the quality of life for aging patients.

"Recent research shows that healthcare providers have many weaknesses and that pain continues to be under treated" (Pasero and McCaffery, 2004).

Myths of ageism, pain regarded as a symbol of weakness, fear of addiction or dependence, and pain as a normal part of the aging process are dispelled.

While pain assessment can be a frustrating and complicated process, literature suggests that geriatric patients are more receptive to the Faces Pain Scale-Revised (FPS-R) (Hicks, 2001). The Wong-Baker Faces Scale (Wong and Baker, 1988) has historically been used at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital.

**Problem**

Review pain assessment and management policy, focusing on pain assessment tools

Examine current literature and determine if current practice regarding pain assessment tools is evidence-based best practice

Collaborate with Pain Assessment and Management Task Force to implement a policy and practice change utilizing an evidence-based culturally diverse pain assessment tool for geriatric patients

Secure authors’ permission to incorporate copyrighted tool into policy

Develop and implement online survey to assess nurses’ knowledge and attitudes toward assessing and managing pain in older adults

Develop educational program promoting policy changes, with particular emphasis on geriatric aspects of pain assessment, specifically:

- available multidimensional assessment tools
- appropriate use of tools
- current evidence on pain management of the elderly

Create and distribute to all patient care areas an evidence-based educational brochure and a supply of pain assessment tools for appropriate pain assessment of geriatric patients

Distribute post-intervention survey to all nurses

Analyze data and evaluate effectiveness of education based on post-intervention survey results

**Evidence**

The promotion of comfort and relief of pain is essential to nursing practice. A consistent, proactive approach should be taken to assess older adults for pain. Research suggests that incorporation of multidimensional facets of pain assessment and management provides best care and improves the quality of life for aging patients.

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**Strategies**

**Practice Change**

Incorporated Faces Pain Scale-Revised® into patient care policy, Pain Assessment and Management Guidelines

Distribute 10 x 3 ½ inch neoprene replicas of Faces Pain Scale-Revised® tool with J hooks for mounting in patient rooms

**Evaluation**

Pre-intervention survey completed by 631 registered nurses

Data analysis suggested discrepancies exist in current practice compared to evidence-based best practices

Post-intervention survey completed by 437 registered nurses

**Results**

**Recommendations**

Providing staff with valid and reliable pain assessment tools and educating them on their use is an important strategy to improve pain assessment and management of pain in geriatric population.

Collaboration and hard work armed with current evidence bring about success.

**Lessons Learned**

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