Creating a Goal-Based Pain Management Plan

What is your pain tolerance? Mine, I thought, was relatively high until I was introduced to a small but mighty kidney stone. When the ED nurse assessed me, he asked me to provide a score – zero to ten, describe the pain, and what my pain goal was (zero please!). I was able to answer his questions, we discussed medication which I gratefully accepted, and I found relief. A repeat assessment put me at my goal of ‘zero.’ This was a classic case of assess the pain, treat based on the patient’s goal and preferences, and evaluate the outcome.

Most cases involving a patient in pain are not so straightforward. Not all patients are able to communicate their pain or express their goals and preferences. Some patients refuse pain medications for many reasons and some families may not want their loved one to be less alert or communicative. Pain is subjective and we all experience pain differently. Managing pain can be extraordinarily complex and requires ongoing communication, assessment and adjustment.

For patients at the end of life, pain can be the result of many things - the disease process, immobility, even treatments. One of the core goals of hospice care is to reduce pain to a level that is acceptable to the patient. To do so, we work with the patient and their caregivers to identify not only the patient’s pain but their goals and treatment preferences.

Pain management helps the hospice team decrease psychological, spiritual, and physical stress and allow for a more comfortable death. We educate patients and their families about the dying process and discuss end-of-life goals and preferences. Probative questions like, ‘what pain level is acceptable to you?’, ‘how important is staying mentally alert in the final days before death?’ and ‘what concerns do you have about pain medications?’ are used to help create each patient’s individualized pain management plan. Within their care plan. Our team provides education on both pharmacological and non-pharmacological pain management.

As part of care planning, the patient’s hospice care team identifies and discusses pain management goals interventions with input from the patient, caregiver, family, nursing home staff and physician. The plan includes measurable goals incorporating interventions based on the patient’s goals and preferences. Working together, we can provide pain relief and optimal care to our patients at the end of their lives.

Have a Question? Call Us!

Referral Center
7 Days a Week
845-240-7555

Hospice Care
Call Us 24/7
845-240-7510

Palliative Care
845-240-7557

General Inquiries
845-485-2273

Bereavement Center
845-240-7579
Is it Time for Hospice? Tips for People Living with Cancer

This information is intended to help you identify patients who may be ready for hospice care. Each month, we will highlight disease-specific guidelines. There are many paths to hospice, so please call us with any questions.

Basic questions to ask yourself:

- Does the resident have a life-limiting illness?
- Would you be surprised if the resident died within 6 months?

Disease-specific criteria for cancer

- Known metastases, weight loss, systemic symptoms or declining functional status
- A continued decline in spite of therapy
- Patient may decline further curative directed therapy

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September: Pain Awareness Month

Chronic pain directly impacts millions of people in the United States. Understanding more about the underlying causes of pain can help improve treatments and alleviate suffering.

- Pain is an alerts signal that directs us to a problem that needs attention.
- Pain starts in receptor nerve cells located beneath the skin and in organs throughout the body.
- Living with pain can be debilitating and negatively affect daily routines

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Breaking Down the Myths

**MYTH:**
Pain is just a part of dying

**FACT:**
Some people never experience physical pain at the end of life. For those that do, a team of professionals work together with the patient to decrease pain to a tolerable level to the patient.

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Quote of the Month

Out of the mountain of despair,
 a stone of hope.

- Martin Luther King Jr.