

HEALTH & SAFETY: PALLIATIVE CARE

“Pain Management”

BQIS/Outreach Fact Sheets provide a general overview on topics important to supporting an individual’s health and safety and to improving their quality of life. This is the second of four Fact Sheets regarding Palliative Care.

Objectives

To provide information related to the definition, purpose, interventions, and strategies that encompass pain management.

Definitions

Pain: An uncomfortable sensation by which the peripheral nervous system (PNS) warns the central nervous system (CNS) of injury or potential injury to the body.

Pain management: Process of providing care that alleviates or reduces pain.

Facts

- Pain is an intensely unpleasant experience that only the person experiencing it can know.
- Pain is subjective; each individual has their own way of expressing pain.
- Individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) often have trouble communicating pain and are often unable to express the location or intensity of the pain.
- Pain almost always causes anxiety or fear at first.
- Pain is worsened by anxiety and tension, depression and sleeplessness.
- The key to effective pain management is assessment and frequent reassessment, including information regarding location of pain, intensity, radiation, aggravating factors, timing, and quality.
- A comprehensive plan for pain relief should always include ways to relieve emotional distress and promote relaxation.
- Consistent staff allows more familiarity with the individual for better identification of change, assessment of individual’s condition, and anticipation of individual’s needs.

Recommended Actions and Prevention Strategies

1. Report to nurse or supervisor immediately:
 - Uncontrolled or increased level of pain
 - Changes in levels of consciousness, including confusion or agitation
2. Ensure all persons in the individual's life are able to recognize general signs/symptoms of pain for that person including:
 - Change in behavior that may indicate discomfort
 - Usual signs of discomfort for the person
3. Ensure staff are competent in completing pain rating scales and pain management diaries including:
 - Knowing how often to reassess
 - Knowing who and when to notify when pain is not controlled or of any new onset of pain
4. Maintain regular monitoring of pain diaries for trends and indicators of what is and is not effective for pain relief and for making needed changes in approaches.
5. Ensure staff are trained in regards to pain medication to:
 - Know dosages and indications of medications
 - Know physician-ordered frequency for medications
 - Know how to safely administer multiple pain relieving medications per physician orders
 - Know how to evaluate effectiveness and report unsatisfactory pain relief
 - Know how to monitor for adverse medication effects
 - Know how to manage controlled substances
 - Know what to do to ensure needed medications are in the home at all times
6. Ensure staff are knowledgeable of appropriate pain-reducing measures other than pain medications.
 - Soft music, massage, positioning, heat, ice, distraction, relaxation therapy, and promoting good sleep patterns
7. Utilize services of PT and/or OT to provide some comfort measures/therapies

Learning Assessment

Questions that can be used to verify a person's competency in the material contained in this Fact Sheet:

1. True or False: Every person perceives pain differently.
2. True or False: The key to effective pain management is assessment and reassessment.
3. True or False: Monitoring pain for trends is not helpful in the overall management of pain.

References

Providence Extended Care Center Protocol for Pain Management

Fast Fact and Concept # 192: Palliative Care for Adults with Developmental Disabilities,
N. Ellison MD and D. Rosielle MD – www.eperc.mcw.edu/fastFact/ff_192.htm

Department of Pain Medicine and Palliative Care at Beth Israel Medical Center – www.stoppain.org

Related Resources

Palliative Care Series Fact Sheets: “General Considerations”, “Comfort Measures”, “Adaptive Equipment”

Pain Assessment Rating Scale

Pain Management Diary

Learning Assessment Answers

1. True
2. True
3. False

Outreach Services

outreach@fssa.in.gov • DDRSOutreach.IN.gov

As a service for persons supporting individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities, BQIS/ Outreach developed the Outreach Fact Sheet Library. The information provided is designed to enhance the understanding of the topic and does not replace other professional or medical instructions or individually developed plans. For more fact sheets and information, please visit DDRSOutreach.IN.gov.



Indiana Family & Social Services Administration
Division of Disability & Rehabilitative Services
Bureau of Quality Improvement Services

OR-FS-HS-PN-28(12-30-09)