



P.O. Box 15473 ❖ Lenexa, Kansas 66285-5473 ❖ 913-222-8666 ❖ ASPMN@kellencompany.com

American Society for Pain Management Nursing® Position Statement:

Prescribing and Administering Opioid Doses Based Solely on Pain Intensity

We sincerely regret and call attention to an error we made in the article we wrote presenting the American Society for Pain Management Nursing® (ASPMN®) position statement against prescribing and administering opioid doses based solely on pain intensity (Pasero, Quinlan-Colwell, Rae, Broglio, & Drew, 2016). In the Background section of the article, we incorrectly stated, “The Joint Commission (TJC), a hospital accrediting agency, designated pain as the fifth vital sign in an effort to increase awareness of undertreated pain.” (p. 171) The fact is that TJC never designated or endorsed pain as the fifth vital sign (Baker, 2016). Rather, TJC surveyors often referenced the fifth vital sign concept as an example of what some organizations were doing to assess pain (Baker, 2016). In 2002, TJC addressed the problems with the fifth vital sign approach in terms of unintended consequences (Baker, 2016).

As the authors of the ASPMN® position paper, we unanimously agree that it is critically important to correct the record on this issue because some have blamed TJC standards for contributing to the nation’s



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problems related to opioid abuse as well as overdoses and deaths from these drugs (Ballantyne & Sullivan, 2016). In response to criticism, Drs. Baker and Chassin (2016) from TJC clarified the pain standards, in particular, the use of self-report pain intensity scales for the assessment of pain.

The nurses who authored the ASPMN® position statement have vast nursing experience; we have been in practice from 23 to 47 years. All of us remember when pain was not assessed. Clinicians nationwide rightfully heralded the release of TJC pain standards with the hope that assessment and education would lead to improvements in pain treatment. All of us have witnessed the many positive effects of the pain standards and do not want to detract from them.

We apologize for our error and any misunderstanding it may have created.

Chris Pasero, MS, RN-BC, FAAN

Ann Quinlan-Colwell, PhD, RN-BC, AHN, DAAPM

Diana Rae, MSN, RN-BC

Kathleen Broglio, DNP, ANP-BC, ACHPN, FPCN

Debra Drew, MS, ACNS-BC Retired, RN-BC Retired, AP-PMN



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