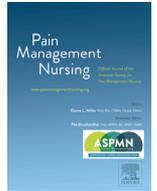




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Society Position Statement/White Paper

Prescribing and Administering Opioid Doses Based Solely on Pain Intensity: Update of a Position Statement by the American Society for Pain Management Nursing® ☆

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ABSTRACT

Prescribing and administering opioid doses based solely on pain intensity is inappropriate and potentially unsafe for many reasons, including that pain intensity ratings are completely subjective, cannot be measured objectively, are dynamic as the experience of pain is dynamic, and may be describing a construct other than intensity (i.e. suffering). Many factors, in addition to pain intensity, influence opioid requirements and subsequent dosing. The American Society for Pain Management Nursing (ASPMN) holds the position that the practice of prescribing and administering doses of opioid analgesics based solely on a patient's pain intensity should be prohibited because it disregards the relevance of other essential elements of assessment and may contribute to negative patient outcomes.

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Background

Prescribing and administering opioid doses based solely on pain intensity is inappropriate and potentially unsafe for many reasons, including that pain intensity ratings are completely subjective, cannot be measured objectively, are dynamic as the experience of pain is dynamic, and may be describing a construct other than intensity (i.e., suffering). Numerous factors, in addition to pain intensity, influence opioid requirements and subsequent dosing. These factors include patient age, quality of pain, sedation level, respiratory status, functional status, tolerance to opioids, drug-drug interactions, response to previous opioid treatments, physical and psychiatric comorbidities, genitourinary status, and cardiovascular status (Levy et al., 2021; Pasero et al., 2016; Quinlan-Colwell & Cooney, 2021; Quinlan-Colwell et al., 2022).

Additionally, the practice of dosing solely by pain intensity discourages nurses from conducting crucial multi-dimensional assessments and applying critical thinking to the care of their patients. Multi-dimensional assessment is consistent with nurses functioning at the highest level of their licensure.

Policy or Position Developed, Recommended, or Adopted (Revised 2022)

The American Society for Pain Management Nursing (ASPMN) holds the position that the practice of prescribing and administering doses of opioid analgesics based solely on a patient's pain intensity should be prohibited because it disregards the relevance of other essential elements of assessment and may contribute to negative patient outcomes. Review of the literature continues to support this position with no changes indicated.

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☆ ASPMN Mission Statement: The mission of the American Society for Pain Management Nursing® is to advance and promote optimal nursing care for people affected by pain by promoting best nursing practices. This is accomplished through education, standards, advocacy, and research.

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