Position Statement: Range Orders in the Management of Pain


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ABSTRACT
American Society for Pain Management Nursing (ASPMN) supports safe medication practices and the appropriate use of pro re nata (PRN) range orders for analgesics in the management of pain within the scope of nursing practice. Although range orders may apply to many medications prescribed as PRN, the focus of this ASPMN position statement is on PRN analgesic medication. PRN range orders are commonly used to provide flexibility in dosing to meet the analgesic requirements of an individual patient. There are many patient-specific factors that require professional clinical assessment when administering medications to patients. Unfortunately, several myths persist regarding the Joint Commission’s (TJC) standard around the implementation of range orders leading many to assume that range orders are not supported or safe. On the contrary, if utilized in a consistent and appropriate manner, PRN range orders can allow nurses to provide optimal pain management while still providing safe administration (Paquette et al., 2022).

Issue Addressed
Registered nurses (RNs) who are competent in pain assessment and analgesic administration, can safely interpret and implement properly written pro re nata (PRN) range orders for analgesic medications.

Issue Background
Because there is wide variability in patient response to analgesics, PRN range orders are commonly used to provide appropriate flexibility in dosing to meet an individual patient’s needs while maintaining safety. Many patient-specific factors influence this variability including pain sensitivity, pain severity, tolerance (opioid tolerance or naivety), age, ability to self-report, pharmacogenetic profile, genetic factors, renal and liver function, and other comorbidities (Herr et al., 2019; Jungquist, Quinlan-Colwell, et al., 2020; Mardini et al., 2022; Nicholas & Robinson, 2022; Quinlan-Colwell, et al., 2022). RNs are educated and expected to consider patient-specific factors when administering medications to patients.

There are several myths regarding TJC pain and medication management standards including the incorrect statement that implementation of range orders does not fall within the scope of RN practice (Quinlan-Colwell, 2018). The Joint Commission (TJC) standard does not prohibit range orders but does require that medication orders are clear and accurate with consistent interpretation by all RNs who work in the same organization (Quinlan-Colwell, 2018; The Joint Commission, 2021).

Policy or Position Developed, Recommended, or Affirmed
The American Society for Pain Management Nursing supports that safe medication practices and appropriate use of PRN analgesic range orders fall within the scope of RN practice.

Declaration of Competing Interests
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