

Paper Session B3: Pain Control and Palliative Care

Knowledge and Attitudes Regarding Pain and Pain Management Among Registered Nurses in an Academic Medical Center

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Problem and Purpose: Decades of research document inadequate pain management. Improved pain management benefits not only patients but also health care institutions. The cost of uncontrolled pain is enormous leading to increased morbidity, extended lengths of stay and repeated hospital admissions, also leading to lost income and increased insurance coverage. The assessment and management of pain among hospitalized patients is a particular challenge for nurses. The purpose of this study was to determine the knowledge and attitudes about pain and pain management among registered nurses in an urban academic medical center.

Theoretical Framework: By surveying nurses' current knowledge and attitudes about pain and its management, deficiencies can be identified and focused educational interventions can be provided.

Methods: As part of an interdisciplinary pain initiative in a large urban academic medical center in the northeastern U.S. all nurses, physician, physical and occupational therapist were invited to complete an online version of McCaffery and Ferrell's Knowledge and Attitude Survey Regarding Pain. A sample of 479 registered nurses who responded to the survey was analyzed for this presentation. Descriptive statistics were used to determine total score and ratings of individual items.

Results: Data analysis revealed some misconceptions about administration and duration of analgesic administration; however, almost all nurses (96%) were not concerned about overmedication or addiction in patients receiving medication for pain. Knowledge of pharmacology items was consistently lower than that of non-pharmacology items. There were 11 pharmacology items in which more than 50% of the nurses answered incorrectly.

Conclusions and Implications: Continuing education regarding pain management remains important for nurses. Adoption of evidence-based practice requires ongoing education programs. Data from this study are being used to design an evidence-based curriculum involving content about pain and pain management.