Pain management in older adults promotes control or alleviation of acute or chronic pain from various causes, while avoiding adverse effects of analgesic medications. The incidence of musculoskeletal pain in older adults is particularly common due to physiologic stress due to pain which may compromise medical outcomes. Persistent pain has been shown to cause or increase depression, anxiety, and sleep disturbance. Evidence shows that increased use of medication for pain management in older adults is associated with mental status and cause delirium in older adults. Effective pain management requires a multidisciplinary approach, including nurses, doctors, pharmacist, occupational therapy, speech therapy, nutrition and dietetics, social work and so much more. Recruit other staff members to assist as necessary, before proceeding.

1. Introduce yourself
2. Identify the patient
3. Provide privacy for the patient
4. Discuss the procedure
5. Review the facility/unit-specific protocol for managing pain in older adults
6. Check the orders and care plan
7. Review the treating clinician's orders, noting orders for pharmacologic agents
8. Review the manufacturer's instructions for all supplies to be used, and verify that they are in good working order
9. Verify completion of facility informed consent documents, if necessary
10. Confirm the patient's identity using two patient identifiers
11. Maintain level of infection precautions, as appropriate
12. Check the patient's medication administration record (MAR) to see the last time the patient received an analgesic agent
13. Administer the prescribed analgesic (typically non-opioid analgesics for pain that is mild to moderate in intensity and opioid analgesics for pain that is severe), if appropriate
14. Monitor for verbal and/or nonverbal indicators that pharmacologic therapy is effective

POST-PROCEDURE STEPS

1. Adhere to prophylactic analgesic administration schedule, as prescribed
2. Obtain an initial pain intensity score using a validated tool
3. Perform hand hygiene
4. Properly dispose of used procedure materials and PPE
5. Monitor for medication toxicity by following prescribed orders for system (CNS) depression and allergic reaction
6. Reassess the patient's level of pain frequently and adjust the pain management plan, if needed
7. Collaborate with the treating clinician to titrate the analgesic dose upward, if necessary, for continued pain behaviors, until a therapeutic effect is observed, side effects occur, or the maximum safe dosage is reached, or no benefit is apparent from the treatment
8. Collaborate with members of the multidisciplinary team to identify other possible causes of pain behaviors that persist despite medication increase
9. Use a facility-approved pain assessment tool to monitor treatment efficacy
10. Monitor for adverse reactions to medications, including central nervous system (CNS) depression and allergic reaction
11. Monitor the patient for medication toxicity by following prescribed orders for system (CNS) depression and allergic reaction
12. Review the facility/unit-specific protocol for managing pain in older adults
13. Verify that the drug has not expired
14. Review the MAR to verify the “rights” of medication administration

Like what you saw?

Encourage family members and other support persons to provide emotional support to the patient into positions that offset pressure on the affected body part, as appropriate. Assess the impact of body position on the patient's pain. Promote comfort by assisting with painful procedures. Provide distraction techniques to draw attention away from physical sensations during painful procedures. Use techniques, such as deep breathing for use in older adults who are able to understand and cooperate with verbal instructions. Use relaxation, guided imagery, and controlled breathing techniques to draw attention away from physical sensations during painful procedures. Encourage family members and other support persons to provide emotional support and physical comfort, as needed. Use distraction techniques to draw attention away from physical sensations during painful procedures. Use relaxation, guided imagery, and controlled breathing techniques to draw attention away from physical sensations during painful procedures. Encourage family members and other support persons to provide emotional support and physical comfort, as needed.

Are Your Nurses Checking All the Boxes?

Check out the Dynamic Health™ competency checklist below to see if your nurses are checking all the boxes when it comes to pain management skills as they work with older adult patients.

PRE-PROCEDURE STEPS

1. Verify the technique/approach patient logistically is safe above
2. Review the patient's medical history and the care plan
3. Choose the patient's personal space
4. Obtain an initial pain intensity score using a validated tool
5. Review the technique/approach patient logistically is safe above
6. Use the patient's personal space
7. Choose the patient's personal space
8. Obtain an initial pain intensity score using a validated tool
9. Review the technique/approach patient logistically is safe above
10. Use the patient's personal space
11. Choose the patient's personal space
12. Obtain an initial pain intensity score using a validated tool
13. Review the technique/approach patient logistically is safe above
14. Use the patient's personal space