

Overview of Pain & the Older Adult

Education Health Care Professionals

Part 4: Approaches for Treatment



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Pain Management Therapies



- **Comfort** may mean different things to different people: one person may be satisfied with feeling less pain, while another asks to be free of pain.
- The use of a collaborative team approach will provide and maximize therapy and pain management in the older adult.
- Pain management therapies may include medications (**pharmacological**), complimentary (**non-pharmacological**) therapy or a combination of both.

(Davies, 2016; King & Fraser, 2013; American Geriatrics Society, 2009)



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Non-Pharmacological Therapy



(Bomba et al., 2017)

- These may include physical, psychological, psychosocial and spiritual care
- Physical therapies:
 - Massage
 - Acupuncture
 - Heat and cold therapy
- Cognitive-behavioural therapies:
 - Mental imagery
 - Relaxation through deep slow breathing
 - Progressive muscle relaxation
 - Music, singing
 - Prayer, meditation



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Pharmacological Treatment



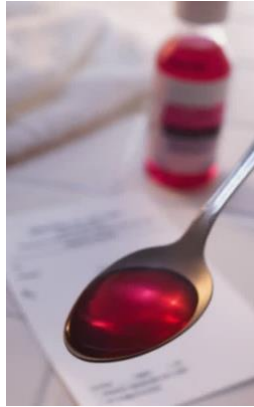
- Treatment of pain may include medications.
- A variety of analgesics (pain medications) may be used to treat pain:
 - For mild to moderate pain, generally non narcotics such as acetaminophen are given.
 - For strong or severe pain, generally narcotics or opioids such as Morphine are given.

(Davies, 2016; King & Fraser, 2013; Cavaliere, 2005)



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Pharmacological Therapy & Side Effects



- Physiological changes associated with aging along with multiple health conditions put the older individual at risk for drug interactions and toxic effects.
- Medications may have unwelcome side effects which cause physical and cognitive changes in an individual such as increased drowsiness, confusion, dizziness and change in bowel habits (i.e. constipation).

([Davies, 2016](#); [Frank & Weir, 2014](#); [American Geriatrics Society, 2009](#); [Cavalieri, 2005](#))

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Evaluation of Pain Management Therapy: Are the Therapies Working?

- Ask the person how they feel.
- Ask the family.
- If the person still has pain, what do they (person or family) think would help?
- Provide holistic (the whole person) person-centered care.
- Observe and report the person's response to therapies. Document using agency forms. Observe at least every 8 hr. or after each medication and report to the Charge Nurse.
- Observe more frequently if the person's pain goal is not met.
- Observe for positive effects (feeling better) and negative effects (they're not feeling better and/or side effects).

([Bomba et al., 2017](#); [National Pharmaceutical Council, 2001](#); [Cavalieri, 2005](#))

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Overview Summary

- ☑ Pain is referred to as the 5th vital sign because it is such an important indication of a person's health status.
- ☑ Pain is the greatest threat to a person's comfort and quality of life.
- ☑ Pain management in the older adult requires a collaborative team approach.
- ☑ We must always remember that the person experiencing the pain is the expert and needs to be an active member of the team.

