

## PAIN MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST

Some recent findings from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) suggest that pain experienced by nursing home residents is prevalent; but it is often not fully reported, recognized, assessed or treated. Studies have shown that 45 to 80 percent of nursing home residents have substantial pain that is under-treated as a result of suboptimal compliance with guidelines for treating pain in geriatric populations. Among those persons with pain who are assessed, 41 percent of nursing home residents are in persistent, severe pain at the next assessment.

Poor pain management can trigger survey citations for abuse, violation of residents' rights (per the self-determination act), and substandard care. In addition, many states have proposed or enacted statutes that address pain management, which has spawned a new trend of lawsuits against health care providers that have inadequate pain management policies and services. Some ways that your staff can protect your residents and facility include the following:

- Carefully reviewing and updating or adopting current pain management policies.
- Educating residents, families and employees about pain management and communication.
- Providing ongoing training as needed utilizing experts within the community.
- Providing tools for use by all frontline caregivers, such as pocket-sized cards with reminders of what staff should check when assessing for pain. These tools should emphasize both verbal and nonverbal signs of pain.
- Including clinicians with pain-management expertise on interdisciplinary care teams and the quality assurance committee.
- Pain should be assessed for every resident upon admission, then quarterly and with every physical or behavioral status change, and screened every shift until well controlled. Staff should use a variety of clinically standardized tools to assess pain in both verbal and nonverbal residents. The initial pain assessment should include the family or caregiver to help identify the following:
  - The characteristics of the pain (such as location, intensity, or other) and precipitating and relieving factors.
  - How the resident responds to pain and how it affects his or her quality of life. Try to determine what his or her beliefs, knowledge, or perception of pain management strategies are.

- The effectiveness of past and present pain-relieving strategies (for example, over-the-counter or prescription medications or therapies).
- As a team, the clinical staff should work with the resident and family member to provide appropriate pain management strategies and interventions that are individualized to meet the resident's needs.
- As indicated, address pain management in resident care plans and interdisciplinary care plan reviews.
  - The care plan for pain should include a pain control goal as defined by the resident, family, and caregivers.
  - Don't forget to address the resident's nutrition and hydration status, as pain and pain medications can produce multiple side effects, such as loss of appetite, gastrointestinal distress, or constipation.
- Monitor the resident to determine the response to the interventions, including effectiveness and emergence of adverse consequences. Record changes in the resident's pain routinely, and keep the physician and family informed of the resident's status in a timely manner.
- Conduct audits to ensure that the facility's pain-management policies are being implemented effectively and that the pain-management needs of the residents are being appropriately addressed.
- Report and discuss pain management at Quality Assurance and morning management meetings.

Residents with chronic or acute pain can create many challenges for their loved ones and health care providers alike. By working together as a team, much can be done to alleviate suffering by managing the pain effectively.

© 2012 GuideOne Risk Resources for Health Care, a division of Lutheran Trust, Church Asset Management. All rights reserved.

This material is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to give specific legal or risk management advice, nor are any suggested checklists or actions plans intended to include or address all possible risk management exposures or solutions.

You are encouraged to consult with your own attorney or other expert consultants for a professional opinion specific to your situation.



GuideOne Risk Resources for Health Care  
 1111 Ashworth Road  
 West Des Moines, Iowa 50265  
 1-800-688-3628