

WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIAL FACTORS OF ESSENTIAL PAIN MANAGEMENT (EPM) PROGRAM?

Ren Tsang Wan Yin, Pain nurse

Essential Pain Management (EPM) is an international program conducted in over forty countries around the world. It was developed in 2010 with the support of Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA). It is a cost-effective, multi-disciplinary program. It provides a simple framework for managing pain. The program encourages early handover to local instructors so that local solutions can be found for local problems. There are already hundreds of EPM instructors worldwide. The aims of the program are to: Improve pain knowledge of frontline staff including doctors, nurses and allied health professionals, implement a simple framework for managing pain and address pain management barriers. And the reasons of adopting EPM program in Hong Kong are because there is inadequate pain management teaching at university, EPM program can provide frontline staff access to basic and essential pain management training. Besides, there is no uniform or structured pain management practice among frontline staff, EPM encourages a unified approach and practice of pain management within hospital or cluster to provide a consistent standard of care.



The Essential Pain Management program is divided into two parts: the EPM one-day workshop and the EPM instructor workshop. Typically EPM runs a "one-half-one" series of courses. On day one, it runs a one-day interactive EPM workshop. The EPM workshop is a program of interactive lectures and group discussions. The Essential Pain Management "RAT" is an important part of the course. RAT stands for Recognize, Assess, and Treat to provide the framework for managing a variety of real-life pain scenarios. The workshop teaches a system for recognizing, assessing and treating pain (RAT) and addresses pain management barriers. On day two, participants from the first day attend a half-day instructor workshop.

The EPM instructor workshop is designed to provide participants with the knowledge and skills to become EPM instructors. Early handover of teaching to local instructors is important because it encourages co-operation between local health workers, and because local instructors are more likely to understand local problems. On day three, the newly trained instructors run one or two courses with the help of the visiting team.

Essential Pain Management uses a "snowball" model for training. Potential instructors are identified early and, through the instructor workshop, are provided with the skills to run more workshops. They are immediately provided with an opportunity to run their own workshop with the support of more experienced instructors.



So what are the essential factors to run Essential Pain Management program?

We can look into few aspects as below:

- Attitude and belief of frontline staff towards pain management**
- Knowledge of pain management of trainers**
- Adequate sharing platform of the knowledge**
- Adequate manpower of holding EPM program, e.g. Team work**
- Sufficiency of the organization support**

In general, many frontline staff put pain management as low priority and low awareness of assessing patients in pain. Some pain consultations to pain team in ward are not even administered any analgesics, therefore, pain as a fifth vital sign needed to be enhance promoted and through EPM program to enhance the awareness in pain management of frontline staff so as to provide adequate and optimal pain management to patients. Second, adequate knowledge of pain management of the trainers is another key factor of running EPM program. Through the EPM program, the trainees are trained to be instructors of the next EPM program, basic knowledge of pain management gained from the lecture, the pool of the trainers of the EPM program can be expanded. Adequate sharing platform of the knowledge is another factor that should be considered. Regular EPM program training for frontline staff in cluster

based or hospital based should be held. Pain knowledge should be spread out and to enhance the size of the trainer pool of the program. Manpower is one of the essential factors as holding an EPM program at least requires four instructors to give lectures, hold interactive group discussion, time keeper and so on. It works as a team work based so every trainer is responsible for different parts of the lectures and the group discussion. Efficient team working of running the program can enhance the fluency of the workflow. Lastly, the support of the organization to hold EPM program is important, to

provide manpower to join EPM program officially, to provide venue utilization for EPM program, to facilitate the organization committee of holding regular EPM program no matter cluster based or hospitalized.

All in all, to enhance the awareness of the frontline staff, regular pain program to provide basic knowledge is essential. By overcoming the pain management barriers, gain the support of the organization and get adequate resources, EPM program is a cost-effective program for frontline medical staff in Hong Kong.