Unravelling the mystery of pain

Nursing the painful patient

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Case Sharing
Total pain

Physical pain
Psychological pain
Social pain
Spiritual pain

→ Physical pain must be controlled before the patient is able to address the issues contributing to his or her psychological and spiritual anguish

(Saunders, 1967)

Pain control

Pain management guidelines ✓
Effective analgesia ✓

? Adequate pain control
Pain control

Issues to be concerned:
- communication shortcomings
- perceptual barriers
- attitudinal hurdles

(Fielding & Chan, 2000)

Nurse’s role in pain control

1. Improved patient analgesia with careful assessment and documentation of pain by nurse.

   (Scott, 1994)

2. Formal assessment of pain and careful documentation by nurses are imperative for effective pain control

   (Clarke et al. 1996 : Scott, 1994)
Nurse’s role in pain control

Caring a patient with pain,
we have to understand:
- What it is?
- How to assess?

What is pain?

… always trust what the patient tells you
Vital signs

In order to assess the most basic body function
- Temperature
- Blood pressure
- Pulse
- Respiratory rate

The 5th vital sign - usually refers to pain

( Walid et al 2008 )

Severity of pain

Numerical rating scale e.g. 0 – 10
Severity of pain

Wong Baker Faces Pain rating scales

Own acceptable level of pain:
Different tolerance
Some patients prefer to tolerate mild level of pain rather than control to the zero level
Character of Pain

sharp, throbbing, burning, searing, stinging,
intense, shooting, dull … …

Location of pain

- May be the same whenever you ask
- May be not, since new pain may develop
- In one site
- In many areas
Palliation and provocation

What makes the pain better, or palliates
→ may only be analgesics
   or
   may be simply changing position

What makes the pain worse, or provokes
→ movement or lying on a particular side

Assessing non-verbal signs of pain

If the person is communicable, it is easy to record and report the pain

If the patient is unable to communicate, we have to aware of physical signs and symptoms, activities, feeding ……
Assessing non-verbal signs of pain

* Clench their teeth / bite the lower lip
* Shut their eyes tightly / dull eyes
* Facial grimacing
* Hold the pain part of the body still
* Rub the sore body part
* Guard the area of pain or withdraw for touch to that area
* Moaning, groaning, cry out
* Restlessness and agitation / constant shifting in bed
* Sweating, appear pale
* Rapid or shallow breathing

Patient’s response

- Different, may be affected by background or culture
- Not so serious when family is there, or
- Worse when family is around
- Say nothing about the pain, or
- Cry out or complains
- Want quick relief
- Pain relief is a sign of weakness
- Pain medication is addictive … …
Documentation

- Severity
- Location
- Medications given
- Treatments given … …

Care the patient in pain

A. Talk to the patient
   - Show that you recognize the patient’s pain and respond with a caring attitude.
   - Listen carefully to what the patient says about the pain.
   - Be empathetic
   - Talk slowly and quietly with the patient
Care the patient in pain

B. Positioning
- Change the position of the patient to make him or her more comfortable
- Place padding over pain areas of the body
- Move the patient in a gentle way slowly

C. Act to relief the pain
- Give analgesia regularly

D. Heat or cold pads
- Apply heat or ice to the painful area
Care the patient in pain

E. Distraction
F. Gentle massage
G. Relaxation / Imagery
H. Relief of psychological pain
I. Or simply
   - offer appropriate food
   - give enough fluids
   - give a warm, relaxing bath

Care the patient in pain

H. Care the painful patient’s family
   - Talk to them, they may understand more
   - Comfort, reassure and support
   - Let them know we care and concern their loved one’s pain or other discomforts
Good nursing care

Time
Patience
Forbearance
Self-discipline
Kindness
Compassion

Skills and knowledge

→ Trusting relationship

↓

Effective pain control

Good basic nursing care
may help alleviate symptoms simply
Excellence is doing ordinary things extraordinary well

(John W. Gardner)