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Editorial

Importance of Interdisciplinary Pain Management



Chronic pain is one of the most common complaints that influence an individual's sense of well-being, productivity, and quality of life. In 2016, chronic pain affected approximately 20.4 % of the adult population in the United States (Dahlhamer et al., 2018). Moreover, the yearly costs of pain management and its related consequences on public health in the nation is approximately \$560–635 billion (Institute of Medicine, 2011). Despite advances, effective chronic pain management continues to pose unique challenges and remains of paramount importance in the healthcare delivery process. Plus, chronic pain management requires coordinated evidence-based efforts for all stakeholders to achieve best outcomes in the short and long-term.

Chronic pain is a complex phenomenon affected by multiple biological, psychological, and social factors that are interrelated and affect each another (Gatchel, McGeary, McGeary, & Lippe, 2014). It is also frequently undertreated due to numerous barriers such as access to coordinated specialty services, poverty and racial/ethnic disparities, lack of insurance, and limited resources in more remote areas. Increasingly, emphasis on an interdisciplinary pain management approach has gained more attention focusing on how to best manage chronic pain with opioids and other medications combined with complementary and integrative approaches (Umberger, 2019; Blackburn, Abel, Green, Johnson, & Panda, 2019; Drew, Gordon, Morgan, Manworren, 2018; Deyo et al., 2011; Gatchel, McGeary, McGeary, & Lippe, 2014).

Nurses play an integral role in managing chronic pain by assessing and evaluating patients' responses to treatment, providing updates to other colleagues, coordinating care, and facilitating communications between interdisciplinary team members (Gatchel, McGeary, McGeary, & Lippe, 2014). Nurses also play a pivotal role in pain management by functioning in leadership roles. For example, Ryan, Packham, Dawes, and Jordan (2012) identified that a nurse-managed pain clinic for fibromyalgia patients effectively addressed complaints during initial stages of the disease and decreased primary as well as secondary care expenditures. In another pain management clinic, Hadi, Alldred, Briggs, Marczewski, and Closs (2016) discovered that nurse and pharmacist collaboration provides a more individualized and holistic pain management approach and identifies improved patient outcomes compared to care provided by a general practitioner. In this issue, articles and abstracts from the 2018 ASPMN fall conference describe research by Mack et al. (2019) and others that illustrate how creative and coordinated interdisciplinary team efforts may make positive and lasting improvements in pain management for diverse populations.

In today's dynamic healthcare environment, it is important to consistently examine how timely, collaborative, and effective interdisciplinary efforts enhance pain management and achievement of targeted outcomes. However, despite these efforts, the planned pain management goal is not always easily achieved. Below are some helpful tips to facilitate effective interdisciplinary collaboration with patient and family involvement.

1. Put in place a patient-centered approach that devotes the required time to listen and respond to patients and their families' needs, recognizing they are active partners in establishing and achieving the patient's pain management goals (Hurlock-Chorostecki et al., 2016). Through this approach, the team will demonstrate their fundamental commitment to providing individualized and timely, coordinated care and increase patient/family satisfaction.
2. When working with colleagues from different disciplines as well as with patients and their families, ensure there is sufficient time for good listening. It is important to be respectful of others views and sensitive to cultural differences, while being open-minded, adaptive, and action-oriented. Establishing feasible and clear goals and achievable timelines will increase the likelihood of success. Plus, consistent monitoring and evaluation of pain management outcomes are essential and may lead to revisions of the interdisciplinary plan of care.
3. Maintain clear, frequent, respectful communications among all healthcare professionals. By adopting this approach there is greater likelihood of more effective shared decision-making, coordination of team activities, stronger work connections and collaboration with team members at different levels (Hurlock-Chorostecki et al., 2016).
4. Provide regular opportunities for interdisciplinary interactions to problem-solve common clinical issues while recognizing every individual's contribution toward achieving team goals. This approach helps increase team member satisfaction and collaboration (Espinoza, Peduzzi, Agreli, & Sutherland, 2018).
5. Create shared goals and vision among team members as this promotes team member commitment to his/her duties and enhances the quality of individual contributions (Espinoza, Peduzzi, Agreli, & Sutherland, 2018). Writing down and distributing the goals/vision to all members while regularly monitoring patient progress can facilitate achievement of the established goals.
6. Consider the addition of a technology expert to setup systematic information sharing and a documentation process.

In summary, chronic pain management is a prevalent part of our practice and remains a costly healthcare issue in the United States and throughout the world. Despite the identification of best treatment approaches for chronic pain management, there still remain major obstacles in implementing them (Gatchel, McGeary, McGeary, & Lippe, 2014). While working in teams can be challenging, the rewards of true teamwork can be energizing and satisfying, particularly when the lives of patients and families are improved. Pain management nurses have a unique and excellent opportunity to assist in improving the implementation of the delivery of coordinated best care practices. Look for the ways to enhance the teamwork experience and take a leadership role.

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