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American Society for Pain Management Nursing®: In Defense of Education

The American Society for Pain Management Nursing®, ASPMN®, is an organization which represents nurses of varying degree who are currently or have been employed in the pain management specialty, or are committed to providing patients with pain in all settings with optimal pain care. The membership is comprised of nurses working in all clinical settings, academia, and industry. Our 1500 members represent a wide range of educational backgrounds as well as a wide range of clinical training and knowledge. ASPMN® was founded 25 year ago to encourage nurses in the management of pain to become more knowledgeable regarding all facets of the pain area, including those related to pain and addiction.

Education is the basic component of the annual conference, which is held each fall. This event brings together the experts not only in pain management nursing, but is also able to secure leaders in other specialties, such as physicians, pharmacists, and those who practice the complimentary and integrative forms of pain therapy. We pride ourselves on the quality of education that we provide to attendees. In addition, our annual conference allows those who are new to pain management to become more proficient in their knowledge base and in their care for patients. It is our intention to have the membership of ASPMN® be the most knowledgeable nurses in the workforce with regard to pain care.

It has been shown that the curricula in medical schools, and schools of nursing are sadly lacking in the number of hours dedicated to pain and its management, therefore ASPMN® and its membership are dedicated to expanding the necessary educational experiences for nursing to provide optimal pain care. The organization has created and continues to support a core curriculum that provides educational content that once mastered can lead to pain management nursing certification that demonstrates an advanced level of proficiency. This curriculum has been expanded recently to maintain currency, and achieve an even higher level of knowledge based on emerging evidence surrounding pain management.

ASPMN® members, strive to achieve a balance of quality of care for our patients, regardless of age, gender or disease state, which can only be accomplished through lifelong learning and advancement of proficiency beyond the basic level provided in any nursing program.

Given our position on the need for a high level pain management education, we seek opportunities to expand to pain management knowledge in all areas. For Example, The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2012 required the pharmaceutical manufacturers of Sustained Release and Long Acting (ER/LA) opioids to support an educational effort to enlighten the

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medical community about the issues surrounding pain, its management, and the use of opioid products in this category of ER/LA. This educational effort has been ongoing since that time.

Recently the FDA convened an advisory committee to review the results of the educational initiative. This initiative was based on the availability of education for those who prescribe opioids on an ongoing basis. Although the program was designed to educate those who prescribe, we suggest there should have been the inclusion of other healthcare providers, such as nursing, even those who do not prescribe. This has clearly been a deficit in the educational process, and must be addressed through modification to the initiative. All nurses, regardless of whether or not they have prescriptive privileges, care for patients in pain who may be treated with opioid analgesics. As such, they also require this knowledge to adequately provide care.

Modifications should include, the addition of nursing into the total number of those who will need to complete the education. Nurses, as a general rule, spend more time with patients, learn more about all aspects of patients' lives, and are clearly in a better position of knowing the current status of any patient on opioids, whether immediate release or ER/LA. It is our intent to have the FDA include the entire healthcare team with revisions to the ER/LA REMS program. Recently an article ([Radford University May 26, 2016](#)) was published that elucidates the need for additional education on pain and opioids for nursing, in particular nurse practitioners. In that article approximately 191 schools of nursing will begin to incorporate additional pain management content. The American Academy of Colleges of Nursing has been instrumental in development and adoption of the new curriculum. They have taken a strong position on nursing's role in providing a responsible, methodological approach to long term pain management. "There are alternatives to high-powered pain medications, and advanced practice nurses are critical to patient education about choices and proper use of medications." Education is the key to providing nurses and other health care practitioners who care for patients who suffer with pain the most effective tools to optimize care.