

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR  
**Pain Management**  
  
**Nursing**

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Nancy Eksterowicz – June 16, 2010

Good Evening

The American Society for Pain Management Nursing believes that everyone should have access to effective pain management and it is our mission to educate all nurses to provide that access.

Elected officials share a responsibility to make sure that nurses throughout the health care system are adequately educated in pain management and that funding is available to address the nursing shortage. When nurses are equipped with adequate knowledge and are readily available to prevent pain or to care for people in pain, direct and indirect cost-savings are realized.

Pain is the most common reason for readmissions following Same-Day Surgeries. In 2007 a retrospective study of patients undergoing same-day surgery, found that Pain was the primary reason for readmissions after any type of surgical procedure. Of those unanticipated admissions and readmissions, pain was the most commonly reported reason for return, occurring in 38% of patients. Mean charges for patients with unanticipated admissions and readmission due to pain were as high as \$5000 per visit. Given the rising costs of health care that number has more than tripled. Post-operative pain alone increases the possibility of post-surgical complications, raises the cost of medical care, and most importantly, interferes with recovery and return to normal activities of daily living. Reducing complications equates to better patient outcomes and studies show better quality care reduces lengths of stay and can lower costs," according to the American College of Surgeons.

Appropriate nursing education and training on pain management issues and treatment is vital for nurses who are often the most trusted and effective advocates for patients. Nurses with knowledge about the latest evidence-based practices in pain management clearly demonstrate potential cost-savings for adequate assessment and management of pain;

Nurses in the recovery area of the operating room are responsible for recovering patients during the critical phase following anesthesia. The average direct cost per minute in a post-operative recovery room is \$2.39, or averaging \$143.00 per hour. Nurses help reduce costs in the post operative care of patients by properly

treating and preventing pain thus reducing the time spent in the recovery room/or ICU. More importantly, cost savings occur when pain is adequately controlled throughout the healing phase, thus reducing negative consequences associated with undertreated pain and suffering.

It can cost as much as \$160,000 to hire and train a new nurse. If you have to ask if it's worth it you have never been a patient. Imagine a world where nurses ceased to exist... Just vanished from hospitals and clinics. Consider a visit to the Emergency room. You approach the desk and the receptionist tells you there will be a delay. (After all you are not the only one with an emergency). No one will know that your visit warrants immediate attention because the educated nurse is not there to triage. When you make it to the exam room and there is no nurse who calms you and intelligently answers your questions you panic. You will only have one chance to ask the doctor and you better remember everything because that is your only chance. You are in severe pain and the physician only has enough time to examine you and call for that X-Ray before moving on to the next emergency. There is no time to run to the medicine station and give you something to relieve the pain. Nor will there be a competent nurse to assess the effects from powerful pain medications.

After all the MD has all he/she can do to keep up with the next emergency. You are now in so much pain, filled with anxiety you begin to feel nauseated. You will pass out or worse .... who will run and get the basin when you ...? Okay I think you get the picture.

Treating pain can help reduce time spent in the emergency room, the hospital especially recovery rooms and critical care units and prevent re-admissions due to untreated pain. Certainly it will cause decreased patient satisfaction, impaired quality of life and psychological consequences.

What you may not know is that untreated or even undertreated pain has very bad effects on the body.

You will be less likely to participate in physical therapy

Have Impaired postoperative function, such as taking deep breaths to increase oxygen into the body necessary for healing, rendering you more susceptible to Pneumonia and poor healing due to lack of oxygen. Because pain limits your ability to move, you will be at higher risk for complications such as deep vein thrombosis or blood clots ..putting you at risk for embolitic strokes and heart attacks.

Over activity in your nervous system caused by continuous pain signals begins to change the nerves from your spinal cord to your brain. If these signals do not get turned down or off chronic pain rears its ugly head.. - Some of these

changes are irreversible. The cost of chronic pain over the life of a 30-year-old patient is estimated to be well over 2 million dollars.

Since the publication of first AHCPA Acute Pain Guidelines in 1994, failure to relieve pain in over half of postoperative and cancer patients is gaining recognition as a national healthcare problem. The complex factors accounting for the under-treatment of pain inevitably point to the low priority that has been given to pain management education. The recent attention from the Joint Commission has led to improvements reflected in the important role Pain Nurses have in educating frontline Nurses and the public.

Here's one estimate for the cost of chronic pain for society at large: \$61.2 billion per year. That amount is from a recent article by Walter Stewart, PhD, MPH, in the Journal of the American Medical Association. But Stewart points out that it's still only part of the picture. That staggering sum is only the money drained from U.S. businesses because of productivity lost from employees in pain.

The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Kathleen Sebelius, has said that the current health care system both under-treats and fails to prevent chronic conditions, a flaw that has contributed to spiraling medical costs. She said that better prevention and treatment of such conditions would save the nation money by preventing costly complications. There is no better investment for the health care in this country than the investment in educating Nurses.