Measurement of Pain as the Fifth Vital Sign

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Disclosure Statement of Financial Interest

I, Stephen Gilbert, DO NOT have a financial interest/arrangement or affiliation with one or more organizations that could be perceived as a real or apparent conflict of interest in the context of the subject of this presentation.
Measurement

A method of determining quantity, capacity, or dimension. Several systems of measurement exist, each one comprising units whose amounts have been arbitrarily set and agreed upon by specific groups.

“...but when you cannot measure it, when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meagre and unsatisfactory kind.”

“"If you can not measure it, you can not improve it."

—Lord Kelvin
How?
What?
Why?
What next?
Discussion
Pain Measurement

Physical – response to stimulus
Dol – developed to quantify pain threshold, "just noticeable difference" & maximum tolerated.

Questionnaire – too many to count

Self Report – Visual Analogue, verbal & numerical rating, dolotest
physical
physical
physical
physical
physical
Questionnaires

- McGill
- BPI
- Oswestry
- Low back pain scoring
- Low back pain rating
- Pain & Distress Scale
- Illness behaviour Questionnaire
- Pain Perception Profile
- Bio-behavioural pain profile
- TSK
- DAPOS
- Becks
- POMS
- Pain Catastrophising
- SF36
- EQ5D
- Roland Morris
- WOMAC
- Etc .......
Self report

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
No Pain   Worst Possible Pain
MILD       MODERATE       SEVERE

DOLOTEST

• Pain
• Problems with light physical activities
• Problems with more strenuous physical activities
• Problems doing your job
• Reduced energy and strength
• Low spirit
• Reduced social life
• Problems sleeping
IMMPACT
Pain – Numerical or verbal scale + analgesic use
Physical functioning – MPI or BPI
Emotional – Beck or Profile of Mood
Global Impression of Change
Symptoms & adverse events – free text
Patient disposition – what happened?

Dworkin et al IMMPACT recommendations – Pain 113 (2005) 9-19
The 5th Vital Sign

Introduced by APS 1996

Taken up in California VA, 1999

Worldwide campaign – Declaration of Montreal

purpose – to raise awareness

Assessing & treating pain is just as important as checking vital signs
Objectives: The overall objective of this policy is to prevent pain and suffering

- Provide a system-wide standard of care for pain management that will reduce suffering from preventable pain.
- Assure that pain assessment is performed in a consistent manner.
- Assure that pain treatment is prompt and appropriate.
- Include patients and families as active participants in pain management.
- Provide for continual monitoring and improvement in outcomes of pain treatment.
- Provide for an interdisciplinary, multi-modal approach to pain management.
- Assure that clinicians practicing in the VHA healthcare system are adequately prepared to assess and manage pain effectively.
How bad is your pain?

Q. "I don't really have pain, but I do have aching; is that pain?"

A. “People experience physical discomfort that they may label as something other than pain. This may include aching, pulling, tightness ..... rate this aching experience on the pain scale. This will help us in making an assessment.”
The Backlash –

“Why pain cannot be a vital sign”
Hornstein - http://www.kevinmd.com/blog/2011/05/pain-vital-sign.html

“Misinterpretation of the Fifth Vital Sign”


How can we counter negative publicity?
Understanding
Understanding
Believing
Understanding
Believing
Explaining
Understanding
Believing
Explaining
Knowing our limits
Understanding
Believing
Explaining
Knowing our limits
Sharing decisions
Understanding
Believing
Explaining
Knowing our limits
Sharing decisions
Using common sense
Thankyou – questions??