

Pain Management

Pain management is a substantial public health concern that has significant economic, social, and medical costs. Although pain sometimes is referred to as the “fifth vital sign,” healthcare providers cannot quantitatively measure it like other vital signs, which can lead to inconsistent treatment approaches and biased treatment decisions. Underprescribing of pain medications can lead to unnecessary patient suffering and impaired function, while overprescribing can lead to abuse, misuse, diversion, dependence, and death. Thus, pain management is a critical issue facing healthcare organizations and providers.

The mechanisms and treatment approaches are different for acute pain versus chronic pain, but both require a multidisciplinary approach. Proper pain management largely depends on consistent, accurate pain assessments; qualified, competent, and properly credentialed staff; medication safety measures; and patient education related to pain management and the risks of pain. Healthcare organizations and providers can use this checklist to evaluate risks in relation to their pain management approaches.

	Yes	No
Does your organization have an interdisciplinary pain management committee to oversee its pain management program and patient outcomes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the pain management committee include representatives from various specialties (e.g., primary care, pain management, addiction medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, nursing, psychology, occupational therapy, pharmacy, etc.) as well as support staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has your organization conducted a facility-wide assessment of its approaches to pain management?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization use evidence-based guidelines developed by specialty organizations and associations as the basis for its pain management approaches?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
Does your organization have written policies and procedures for both acute pain management and chronic pain management?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do pain management policies and procedures adhere to federal and state drug monitoring regulations specific to pain management and controlled substances?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do pain management policies require providers who evaluate and treat pain to conduct thorough medical histories, physical exams, and comprehensive pain assessments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization have a multimodal approach to pain management that addresses the total person and considers biological, psychological, and social factors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization's pain management program include assessment, treatment, communication, education, and follow-up?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do providers receive comprehensive pain management education regardless of the area in which they work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does pain management education for providers include information related to pain in special populations, such as women, children, older adults, veterans, racial and ethnic minorities, cancer patients, people who have sickle cell disease, etc.?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization have detailed policies and procedures related to preventing drug diversion ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are providers who specialize in pain management credentialed for specific pain management techniques and treatments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization have an up-to-date procedural sedation policy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are providers who are involved in procedural sedation that is given in conjunction with interventional pain management certified in advanced cardiovascular life support?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are patients assessed for indications of obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) before sedation or use of opioid analgesics?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the results of OSA assessments consistently documented in patients' health records?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
Are reversal agents and crash carts immediately available during interventional pain management procedures?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all patients who receive outpatient interventional pain management treatment given discharge instructions that are written in plain language ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do adverse or unexpected outcomes related to pain management, medication, and/or treatment trigger peer review?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are incidents and claims analyzed for risk factors related to pain management?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are patient complaints about pain management monitored, trended, and reviewed for quality improvement opportunities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization monitor and compare patient treatment and outcomes by race, gender, and socioeconomic indicators to identify issues of bias in pain management ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Resource

For more information and strategies related to pain treatment and prescribing, see MedPro’s [Risk Resources: Opioid Prescribing & Pain Management](#).

This document does not constitute legal or medical advice and should not be construed as rules or establishing a standard of care. Because the facts applicable to your situation may vary, or the laws applicable in your jurisdiction may differ, please contact your attorney or other professional advisors if you have any questions related to your legal or medical obligations or rights, state or federal laws, contract interpretation, or other legal questions.

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