

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,” it cannot be quantitatively measured like other vital signs, which can lead to inconsistent treatment approaches. Lack of treatment can lead to unnecessary patient suffering and impaired function. Conversely, overprescribing of pain medications can lead to abuse, misuse, diversion, dependence, and death. These are some of the reasons that 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. The following checklist can be used to evaluate your organization’s potential risk in relation to its pain management approach.

	Yes	No
Has your organization conducted a facility-wide assessment of its approach to pain management?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization have a pain management committee?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization take a multidisciplinary, team-based approach to pain management that includes representatives from various specialties (e.g., primary care, pain management, addiction medicine, nursing, psychology, occupational therapy, pharmacy, etc.) and support staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
Does your organization have written policies and procedures for both acute pain 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"/>
Does your organization address the total person (a holistic approach) and not just the pain in its pain management approach?	<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 staff members receive comprehensive pain management education regardless of the area in which they work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization have detailed policies and procedures related to drug diversion?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are physicians and multidisciplinary staff members 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 physicians and multidisciplinary staff members who are involved in procedural sedation 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 before sedation or use of opioid analgesics? Are the results of those assessments consistently documented in the health record?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are reversal agents and crash carts immediately available during interventional pain management procedures?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all patients receiving interventional pain management treatment or procedures on an outpatient basis given written discharge instructions at a reading level that they can comprehend?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
Do adverse or unexpected outcomes related to pain management, medication, and 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 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"/>

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

This document should not be construed as medical or legal advice. 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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