

## PAIN MANAGEMENT IN GERIATRIC PATIENTS AND THE ROLE OF THE NURSE

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### Abstract:

**Introduction:** The role of the nurse for pain management in geriatric patients is not only for the administration of painkillers prescribed by a doctor. It also includes timely information about it, accurate assessment of its extent, which facilitates the physician's diagnostic actions, rapid intervention and control of the syndrome, in order to achieve the ultimate goal of improving the quality of life of geriatric patients.

**Purpose:** We set a goal to investigate the opinion of geriatric patients, and if the pain syndrome is positively affected by the nurses in inpatient care.

**Materials and methods:** The study includes an anonymous survey of 392 patients aged over 65 years who received treatment in the inpatient department.

**Results:** It was determined that sex factorial signs  $P < 0,01$  ( $\chi^2 = 10,63$ ) and age  $P < 0,001$  ( $\chi^2 = 18,29$ ) are expressed according to the management of pain during hospitalization.

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**Keywords:** geriatric patient, pain syndrome, nurse

### Introduction

Pain is an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described as such. Pain is always subjective and every individual gives his own interpretation of it. It can be classified according to the duration, the etiology, and according to the prognosis. The most common complaint among geriatric patients is pain. The diseases that are most prevalent in geriatric patients are cancer, diseases which affect the musculoskeletal system, and chronic diseases occurring with severe pain (AGS Panel on Persistent Pain in Older persons, 2002). Geriatric patients are often misunderstood because of the pain (Gloth, 2001). The consequences can have a negative impact on the health and quality of life of older people which leads to depression, anxiety, social isolation, cognitive impairment and sleeping problems. (Cavalieri, 2002) (Ferrell, 2001). Medical professionals contribute towards good practices of pain management.

The nurse is the main purveyor in the system of care for anesthesia, not only giving proper information and direction, but for also applying painkillers on time. Effective pain assessment is a prerequisite for proper planning of activities and proper behavior that the nurse should have. During the assessment she must obtain information from the patient and their relatives, which will help her to understand their feelings. The obtained information is necessary for planning and evaluating the strategies to help to cope with the pain syndrome in a timely manner. (Toncheva, 2005)

The author's team of M. Popov, B. Davidov and M. Marinov after a review of literature on the opinions of the patient from hospital services concluded that "the patient is subject to their needs, rights, feelings, satisfaction and dissatisfaction" (Popov M., 2000)

**Purpose:** We set a goal to investigate the opinion of geriatric patients, and if the pain syndrome is aided by the nurses in inpatient care

**Materials and methods:** The study includes an anonymous survey of 392 patients aged over 65 years who received treatment in the inpatient department.

The survey was made using the method of an interview, and given the peculiarities of the research contingent. The study covered all University and General Hospitals in Plovdiv.

**Results:** After statistical processing of data we concluded the following:

The study found that in the majority of patients (62.6%) the pain syndrome during the time period of hospitalization was completely controlled. Half of the remaining respondents (24%) received partial responses, and only 9% of patients clearly had no relief to the pain syndrome. It is noteworthy that 4% of the surveyed geriatric patients could not judge and give a definite answer to the question of- is there

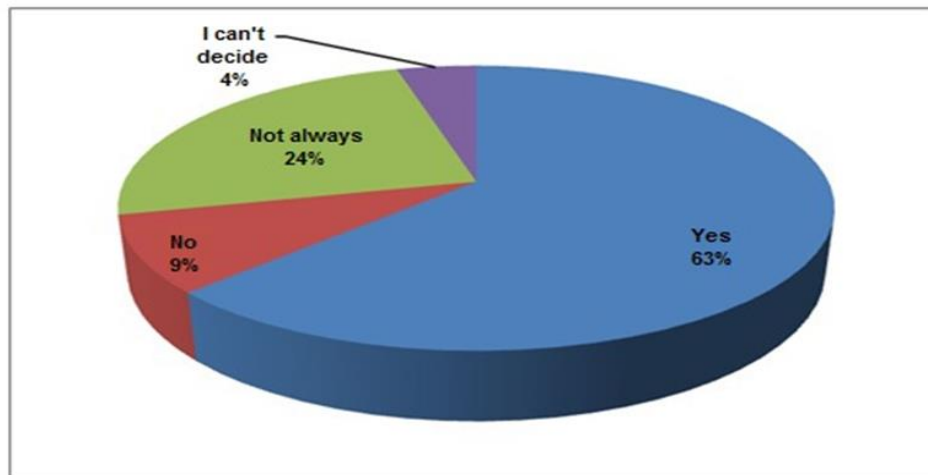
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a positive effect of the applied treatment or even a temporary response in view of the complexity of the used anti-viral therapy (Figure 1).

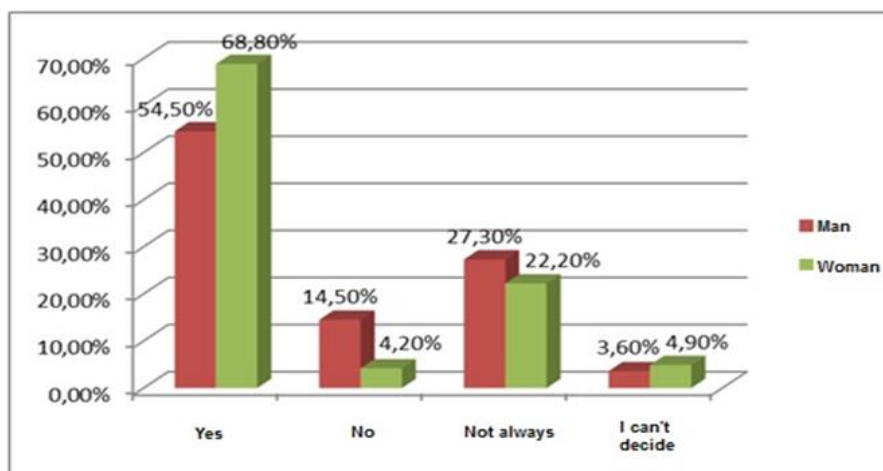
Figure 1: Mastery of the pain process according to the patients



Source: Authors

The conducted statistical analysis confirms the alternative hypothesis, that gender is in strong correlation with the management of the pain during hospitalization  $P < 0,01$  ( $\chi^2 = 10,63$ ) (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Correlation between gender and management of the pain syndrome



Source: Authors

It is noteworthy that in both sexes there is a high percentage of positive responses to pain relief - 54.50% for men and 68.80% for women. Moreover, the women's sample had less than 4% show an inability to decide.

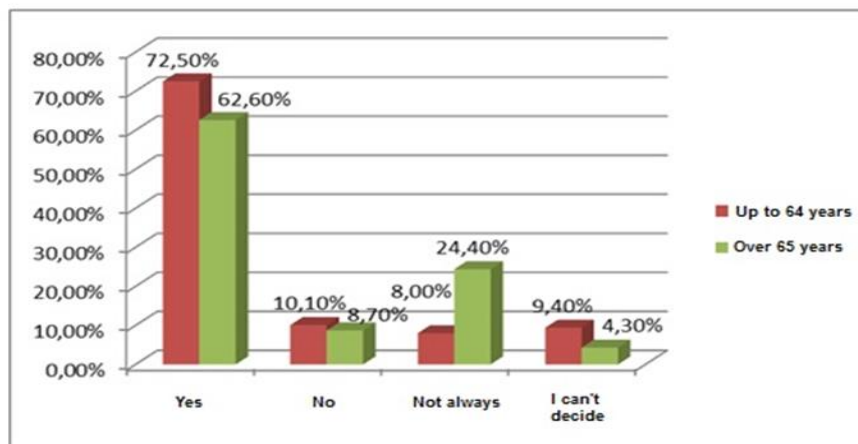
Most likely, we associate this with the greater female emotional state and the constant active search for comprehensive medical care and adequate treatment.

There is a correlation between age and management of the pain syndrome  $P < 0,001$  ( $\chi^2 = 18,29$ ) (Figure 3).

Advancement of the age of patients over 65 years and the presence of concurrent somatic diseases, often several such as: atherosclerosis, transient cerebral circulation disorders and a number of others, suggest that geriatric patients cannot accurately assess and give a clear assessment of the effectiveness

of controlling the pain syndrome - 28.70%. The percentage of respondents from both age groups with definite negative response is also not that small – 18.80%.

Figure 3: Correlation between age and management of the pain syndrome



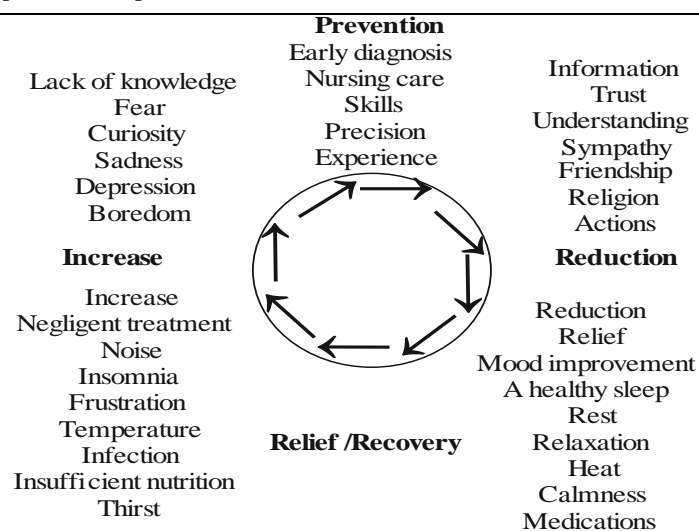
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### Discussion

The obtained results are revealing. According to the ethical code of healthcare professionals the nursing profession is based not only on humanity and compassion, but also on professional competence. Data show that nurses have a deficit in knowledge about management of pain syndromes. Barriers to medical staff for effective pain management are an inadequate assessment and judgment of the same, not reporting by patients, atypical manifestations of pain in the elderly.

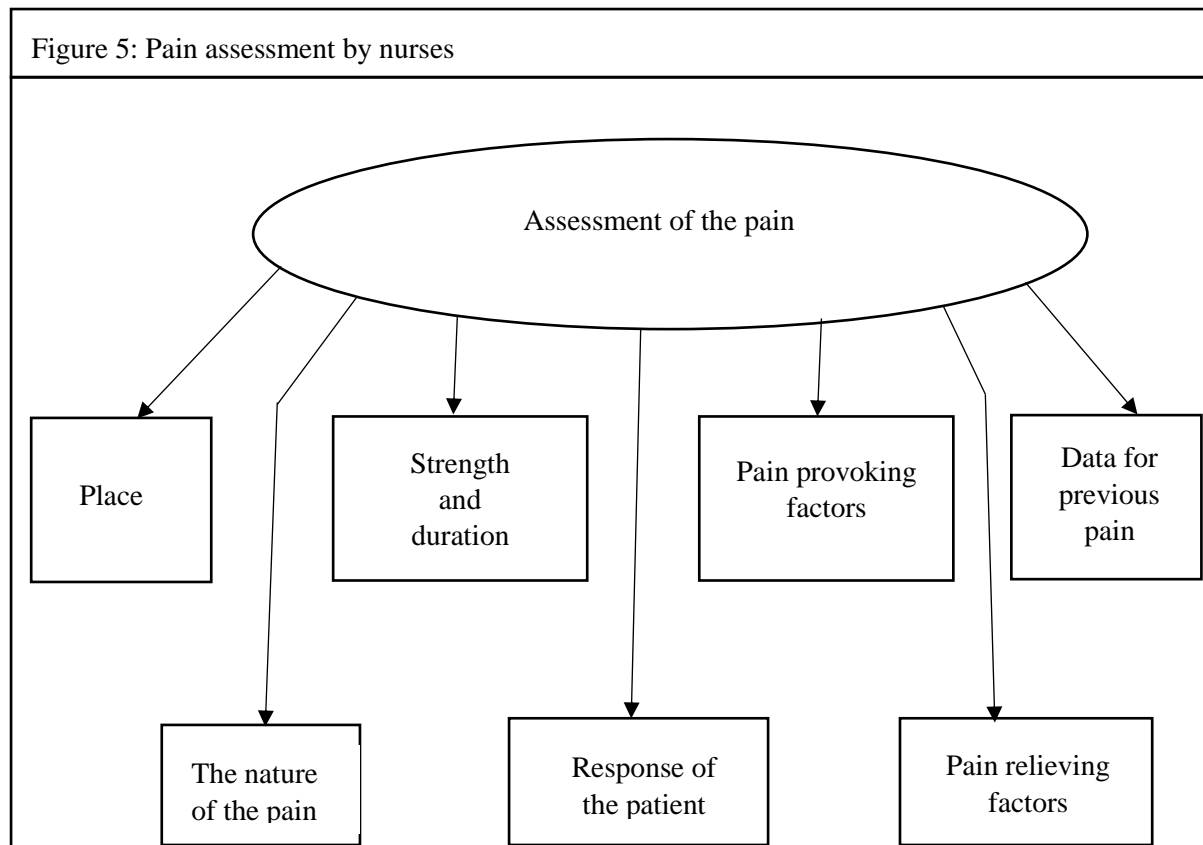
Very important is the skillset a nurse should have when working with people experiencing pain, and that makes it necessary to be well aware of the phenomena (symptoms and behaviors) that can help them in the process of identifying, planning, and assessing the condition and actions that need to be taken. Some authors define a cyclic nature of the pain-related phenomena that can be schematically presented (Figure 4).

Figure 4: A cycle of pain related phenomena



Source: Authors

Effective pain assessment is a must for proper planning of activities and adequate actions that needs to be taken by the nurse. In the evaluation process, the nurse has to get information from the patient and potentially their relatives, which helps the nurse understand the patient's feelings. The information received is necessary for planning and evaluating assistance strategies (Figure 5).



Source: Author

### Conclusion

Pain management for each patient, incl. the geriatric ones is a result of complex factors, in which the physician and the nurse actively participate. Timely information from the nurse about the presence of pain and a proper assessment of its extent especially in the elderly, contribute to rapid pain management, and this is a prerequisite for improving the quality of life of geriatric patients.

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