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**Joint Position Statement on Pain Management for
the South Carolina Board of Nursing and the South Carolina Board of Pharmacy**

Pain management is a national health care concern today for the consumer. Many health care providers and health care agencies are evaluating existing treatment modalities and processes to understand the lack of adequate pain management in the United States. Roughly, there are 50-75 million Americans experiencing some form of pain (Brekken, 2008). Significant percentages of patients undergoing cancer treatments are under treated for pain which could impair quality of life throughout the stages of disease. (National Cancer Institute, 2009).

Inappropriate treatment of pain, including non-treatment, over treatment, and ineffective treatment, can have negative consequences for patients at large. All persons who are experiencing pain have the right to have their pain assessed and managed appropriately. All persons who are experiencing pain also have the right to refuse any undesired treatment. Patients should be encouraged to be active participants in their care. Subjective reporting of pain by the patient and family representatives is the optimal standard upon which all pain management interventions are based. The goal of pain management is to reduce the individual's pain to the lowest level possible, while simultaneously increasing the individual's level of functioning to the greatest extent possible (American Pain Society, 2009).

The South Carolina Boards of Nursing and Pharmacy concur with The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) guideline on pain management which declares that patients have the right to appropriate assessment and management of pain (2008). The application of clinical knowledge and patient-centered treatment modalities improve the quality of life for patients who suffer from pain. All health care providers who treat pain, whether acute or chronic, should become knowledgeable about effective methods of pain management. The management of pain should include the utilization of both pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic modalities. (ASPMN, 2003).

It is therefore incumbent upon South Carolina licensed nurses and pharmacists as health care providers to work cooperatively and effectively to address the dimensions of pain and to assist with providing maximum pain relief measures with the least possible side effects. Patients and families should be assured of competent, safe, comprehensive care during each stage of disease. Nurses and pharmacists should be knowledgeable regarding effective and compassionate pain relief, and patients and families should be confident such pain relief measures will be consistently provided. Communication and collaboration between members of the healthcare team, patient, and family is essential in achieving adequate pain management. In order to effectively communicate guidelines for professional practice and in the interest of public safety, the South Carolina Boards of Nursing and Pharmacy jointly issue the following statement.

The Boards acknowledge that healthcare professionals as patient care advocates should, within their scope of practice:

1. Routinely assess all patients for pain symptoms. When patient pain is reported, both the physical assessment and historical patient data should be evaluated. Pain assessment tools utilized should reflect cultural and ethnic diversity to appropriately identify pain for diverse populations.
2. Educate patients who are reluctant to report pain symptoms on safe and effective methods of pain relief. (National Cancer Institute, 2009)
3. Work collaboratively within a multidisciplinary team that involves the patient and family as core participants to develop and implement an individualized written treatment plan of care utilizing both pharmacologic and nonpharmacologic interventions.
4. Anticipate and manage side effects of pain medications when possible;
5. Ensure that adequate pain management is available for all individuals experiencing pain.
6. Provide accurate information to patients and patient representatives to assist them in making informed decisions regarding their health. Continue to encourage and involve patients in their healthcare.
7. Refer and consult with other providers as appropriate;
8. Stay informed of the risks of diversion and abuse of controlled substances and takes appropriate steps to minimize risks. Be knowledgeable about state, federal, and local regulations for controlled substances.
9. Routinely evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment plan utilizing a standardized developmentally appropriate pain tool that reflects cultural and ethnic diversity.
10. Document all aspects of the plan of care regarding pain management in a clear, concise, and accurate manner;
11. Assist in developing organization-appropriate and evidence-based policies and protocols for pain management;
12. Continue to seek out current pain management education regarding safe and effective pain management strategies.
13. Comply with all state and federal laws and regulations regarding prescribing, dispensing, and administering medications, including controlled substances.

The South Carolina Board of Medical Examiners (BME) Position Statement on Pain is currently on the web and can be reviewed at:
<http://www.llr.state.sc.us/pol/medical/index.asp?file=MEPAIN.HTM>

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