

# **The Efficacy of Nursing Interventions in Promoting Pain Management Among Pediatric Patients**

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## Introduction

One of the most frequent reasons individuals consult physicians or other members of the health team is for pain, which is also a major symptom of many clinical conditions. Pain diminishes the quality of life in children; therefore, preventative measures against pain must be implemented in every area. In spite of advancements in pain management techniques over the last four decades, pain continues to be a worldwide concern among patients who are hospitalized. 86% of hospitalized children experienced pain, with nearly 40% suffering from moderate-to-severe pain (Stevens & Zempsky, 2021).

Experiencing pain is a significant cause of discomfort for both children who are in the hospital, their family caregivers, and the healthcare professionals who take care of them. Children may experience pain due to physical trauma, illness progression, invasive medical procedures, or unidentified causes. The impact of unaddressed or inadequately controlled pain in children should not be underestimated (Achaliwie, 2021). In addition to the immediate bio-psycho-socio-developmental impacts on the child experiencing pain, it can also result in changes in pain sensitivity and the development of chronic pain, which incur significant financial costs for treatment and place a burden on families, healthcare systems, and countries. The presence of these unfavorable outcomes emphasizes the necessity for cautious administration of pain in youngsters.

Assessing pain management is a crucial factor in evaluating the level of treatment provided. Pain management and assessment are essential components of nursing care. Managing pain in pediatric patients is a complex task that necessitates a comprehensive strategy that considers not just the physical dimensions of pain, but also the emotional and developmental requirements of the child (Manworren & Stinson, 2016). Nurses are crucial in this process, as they are the first-line caregivers who have the exclusive opportunity to evaluate, intervene, and support the implementation of pain management measures that are specifically suited to the particular needs of each child.

According to (Friedrichsdorf & Goubert, 2020), inadequately managing pediatric pain, whether it is acute or chronic, can lead to substantial repercussions. In addition to the immediate agony felt by the kid, uncontrolled pain can result in extended hospital stays, delayed healing, and potentially long-lasting psychological effects. Hence, the significance of proficient pain control in pediatric patients cannot be exaggerated.

Nursing interventions are essential in pediatric pain management and include a variety of pharmacological and non-pharmacological methods. Nurses possess the distinctive ability to handle the intricate requirements of pediatric patients experiencing pain, including activities such as giving analgesic drugs, employing distraction methods, and offering emotional support.

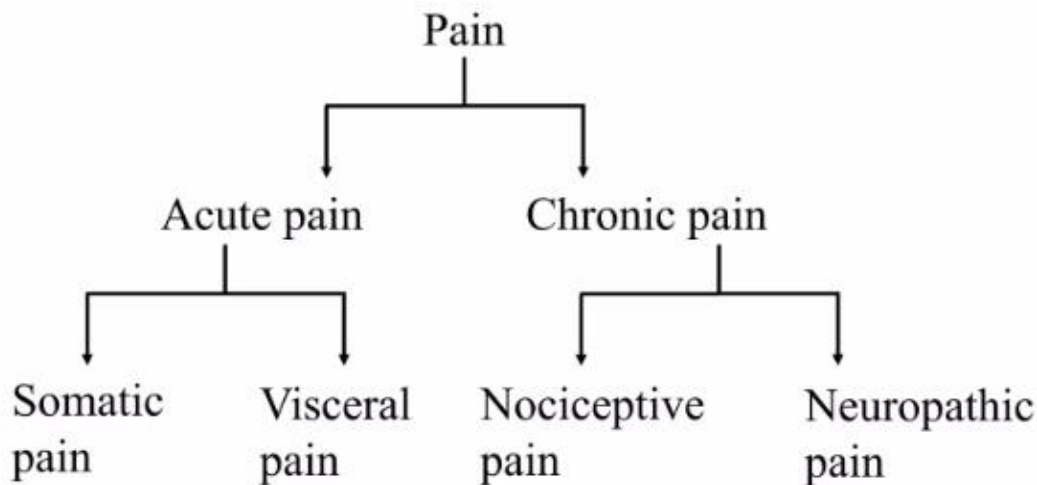
Aziznejadroshan et al., (2016) asserted that by instructing the nurses, enhancing manpower, ensuring the availability of equipment for distraction, and providing proper tools for pain assessment, the management

of pain in children can be improved. In order to enhance the precision of pain assessment in children and evaluate the efficacy of pain management, it is crucial for parents to actively engage in the pain assessment process, thereby enhancing the quality of healthcare. The global need for communication and emotional support among parents whose children are hospitalized in care units has increased.

Nevertheless, despite the crucial significance of nursing interventions, there are ongoing difficulties in maximizing pain management methods in pediatric settings. The problems may encompass constraints in resources, discrepancies in pain assessment methodologies, and the necessity for continuous education and training for nursing personnel. To tackle these problems, it is necessary to actively encourage collaboration between different disciplines, and provide nurses with the necessary expertise and resources to offer care of the highest quality.

### 1. Classification of Pain

Pain is an intricate and diverse phenomenon that can appear in several ways, each with unique traits and underlying causes. Comprehending the various categories of pain can assist the medical and nursing staff in devising suitable nursing interventions for the management of acute pain. The figure presented below illustrates the arrangement and categorization of many forms of pain.



**Figure (1): Classification of Pain**

#### 1.1.Duration of Pain

The duration of pain is a significant factor in classifying pain, which may be divided into two main categories: acute and chronic. Comprehending the duration of pain is crucial for directing evaluation, therapy, and control approaches in clinical settings.

Acute pain refers to a temporary type of pain that often subsides within a period of less than six months. Typically, it is linked to a particular insult or injury, such as a fractured limb, a burst appendix, or even

the process of giving birth (Stevens & Zempsky, 2021). Typically, once the underlying cause is identified and treated, the pain diminishes. Acute pain is commonly characterized as a sharp, piercing, or scorching sensation. There exist numerous efficacious nursing therapies for acute pain.

Chronic pain, on the other hand, is significantly more intricate. Chronic pain refers to pain that persists for more than 6 months and is typically not linked to a specific cause or injury. Headaches, fibromyalgia, and arthritis are all instances of this category of pain (Mailis et al., 2020). Chronic pain can be characterized as either severe or intense, as well as dull, aching, or burning. Furthermore, chronic pain frequently encompasses a psychological or emotional aspect, resulting in symptoms such as anxiety, sleeplessness, melancholy, and impaired functionality in daily activities. Such pain is far more challenging to manage and can significantly disrupt a patient's quality of life.

## **1.2.Location**

The location of pain is an important factor in classifying it, since it helps determine the underlying cause and informs decisions on diagnosis and therapy. Pain can be categorized according to its anatomical location, differentiating between localized pain and transferred pain.

- **Visceral Pain**

Visceral discomfort originates from the internal organs located in the belly and pelvis, including the intestines, female reproductive organs, kidneys, and liver. This form of pain is frequently characterized as widespread, and it can be challenging to pinpoint its exact origin (Pacheco-Carroza, 2021). One factor contributing to this is the occurrence of referred pain, which refers to the sensation of pain being felt in a location that is distinct from the actual site of damage.

Although internal organs are generally resistant to injuries such as lacerations or burns (until a severe injury occurs), they are more prone to causing pain due to inflammation, tissue death (ischemia), and stretching (such as overdistended intestines). Visceral discomfort is frequently characterized as a sensation of pressure, dullness, throbbing, or aching.

- **Somatic Pain**

Somatic pain refers to the sensation of pain that is specifically felt in the skin, muscles, bones, and joints. Visceral pain is characterized by its widespread nature, whereas somatic pain is typically restricted and easily identifiable in terms of its origin (Ingraham, 2019). Typically, it is characterized as a sharp, piercing, throbbing, or scorching sensation. Somatic pain can be from physical trauma, such as a papercut, or from medical conditions like arthritis or bone cancer.

Somatic pain can be classified as either deep or superficial, depending on the location of the damage. Deep somatic pain originates from internal systems within the body. Similar to the structures found in the human body, such as bones, muscles, tendons, and joints (Boezaart et al., 2021). Superficial somatic

discomfort originates from anatomical structures that are located in close proximity to the body's surface, such as the skin and mucous membranes.

### **1.3.Pathophysiology**

Pain is often classified into three main categories: nociceptive pain, neuropathic pain, and psychogenic pain. Nociceptive pain occurs when nociceptors, which are specialized sensory receptors, are activated by harmful stimuli such tissue damage or inflammation (Toda, 2019). This pain is usually confined to a specific area, intense, and well defined, with specific qualities that change depending on the root reason. Instances of nociceptive pain including musculoskeletal pain, postoperative pain, and visceral pain.

Neuropathic pain arises from abnormalities or injury to the neural system, causing abnormal processing of sensory data. Neuropathic pain is commonly characterized as a sensation similar to burning, shooting, or electric shocks. It can also be accompanied by sensory abnormalities such numbness or tingling (Colloca et al., 2017). Neuropathic pain is commonly caused by nerve compression, diabetic neuropathy, and postherpetic neuralgia. Neuropathic pain, unlike nociceptive pain, is difficult to control and may necessitate specific therapies that address the underlying neuropathic mechanisms.

Psychogenic pain is pain that is affected by psychological variables, including emotions, attitudes, and past experiences. This form of pain may lack a distinct physiological foundation and might be intensified or relieved by psychological variables. Psychogenic pain is commonly characterized as widespread, erratic, and disproportionate to any discernible physical injury. Psychogenic pain problems encompass somatic symptom disorder, conversion disorder, and chronic pain syndromes that have a notable psychosocial element.

## **2. Overview of Pediatric Pain Management**

Pediatric pain management is an essential component of healthcare provision, involving the evaluation, therapy, and relief of pain in newborns, children, and teenagers. Pediatric pain management is distinct from adult pain management because it involves addressing specific issues related to developmental disparities, variable communication skills, and diverse causes of pain in children.

One of the primary justifications for giving priority to pediatric pain management is its significant influence on the overall welfare and standard of life of children. If pain is not properly treated or controlled, it can have extensive ramifications (Snaman et al., 2016). This includes causing immediate misery and suffering, as well as slowing healing, decreasing physical function, and potentially resulting in long-term psychological effects. Hence, proficient pain control is crucial not only for alleviating discomfort but also for fostering optimal growth, development, and psychosocial adaptation in young patients.

Assessing pain in pediatric patients presents a unique obstacle in comparison to adults, mainly because of the inherent communication difficulties. Infants and early children may not have the ability to verbally communicate their pain, however older children and adolescents may exhibit suffering in varying ways due to factors such as cognitive development, cultural background, and past experiences (Beltramini et al., 2017). Additionally, while assessing pediatric pain, it is crucial to take into account developmental aspects, including the use of pain scales that are suitable for the child's age and their capacity to effectively communicate their suffering. The intricate nature of this situation highlights the significance of employing a multifaceted method to evaluate pain in pediatric patients. This method should include analyzing behavioral signals, physiological indications, and caregiver reports in order to thoroughly analyze the presence of pain.

Moreover, pediatric pain management is intricate due to the many causes and expressions of pain experienced by children. Children might suffer from pain caused by various factors, such as sudden traumas, medical operations, long-term illnesses, and developmental abnormalities. For each of these disorders, specific methods of pain management need to be customized, taking into account aspects such as the root cause of the ailment, the stage of development, and the personal preferences of the kid. In addition, young patients may display distinct reactions to pain drugs, necessitating meticulous adjustment and supervision to guarantee both safety and effectiveness.

### **3. Role of Nurses in Promoting Pain Management Among Pediatric Patient**

Nurses have a diverse and vital role in promoting pain management among pediatric patients, ensuring maximum care and comfort for children who are in pain. Nurses serve as primary caregivers who have a pivotal role in evaluating, treating, and advocating for the pain management requirements of young patients. Their position involves various essential duties:

- Comprehensive Pain Assessment

Nurses have the duty of doing comprehensive and developmentally suitable evaluations of pain to precisely ascertain the characteristics, intensity, and site of pain in pediatric patients. They utilize a range of assessment methods and procedures, such as self-report scales, observational assessments, and behavioral observations, to collect extensive information regarding the child's pain experience (Manworren & Stinson, 2016).

- Medication Administration and Monitoring

Nurses have the responsibility of safely and accurately providing pain medications in accordance with recommended dosages and timetables. The medical professionals observe the child's reaction to medications, evaluate for possible adverse effects, and modify treatment plans as needed to achieve the



best possible pain relief while minimizing potential harm. In addition, nurses provide instruction to patients and their families regarding proper methods of administering medication, potential adverse reactions, and effective approaches to pain medication management in a home setting.

- Advocacy and Support

Nurses advocate the pain relief requirements of children patients and ensure that their perspectives are acknowledged and respected throughout the healthcare process. They promote pain management techniques that prioritize the child's comfort and well-being, work together with interdisciplinary teams to address pain-related issues, and offer emotional support and reassurance to patients and families dealing with pain-related difficulties (Failo, 2017).

- Patient and Family Education

Nurses have a crucial role in providing education to pediatric patients and their families regarding pain management approaches, medication schedules, and methods for dealing with pain. They include information regarding the significance of pain management, potential treatment alternatives, and methods to identify and address indications of pain in pediatric patients. Nurses enhance patient and family involvement in pain management and enhance treatment results by equipping them with the necessary information and abilities to properly control pain.

#### **4. Nursing Interventions in Pediatric Pain Management**

Nurses fulfill an indispensable function in the management of pain in children, utilizing an array of interventions to mitigate distress and advance the overall welfare of pediatric patients. Pediatric-specific pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions are incorporated into these programs.

##### **4.1. Pharmacological Interventions**

Nurses frequently provide a range of drugs in pediatric pain management to relieve discomfort and enhance the overall well-being of children patients. Typical drugs utilized for pain treatment in children include:

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol)

Acetaminophen is a commonly used pain reliever and fever reducer that is appropriate for children of any age. It is offered in many forms, such as oral suspension and chewable pills. Nurses must carefully calculate and deliver the appropriate dosage to children, taking into account their age, weight, and medical condition, in order to prevent any harmful effects. Acetaminophen may cause liver damage if used in large amounts (Anderson, 2021).

- Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) including ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and naproxen (Aleve) are frequently used to pediatric patients to alleviate pain and reduce inflammation (Nagaich & Chaudhary, 2023). These medications can be taken by mouth and the dosage is determined by the child's weight and age. Nurses are required to evaluate for contraindications, such as the risk of gastrointestinal bleeding, and observe for potential negative effects, such as impaired kidney function and gastrointestinal discomfort.

- Opioids

According to (Hooten et al., 2017), Opioid drugs, such as morphine, fentanyl, and oxycodone, are only used for moderate to severe pain in children when non-opioid pain relievers are not enough. These drugs are offered in several forms, such as oral, intravenous, and transdermal methods. It is essential to carefully adjust the dosage of opioids, taking into account the child's pain level and how they respond to the medication. Nurses must titrate the doses accordingly. Adverse effects that may arise from the use of opioids include decreased breathing rate, drowsiness, difficulty passing stools, and the potential for developing addiction or dependency. Nurses have a vital responsibility in overseeing the detection of negative effects caused by opioids, delivering additional dosages when necessary, and taking measures to reduce constipation and respiratory depression.

#### **4.2.Non-Pharmacological Interventions**

Nurses can utilize a range of non-pharmacological techniques with medication to improve pain management in pediatric patients. These interventions have the goal of diminishing the impression of pain, mitigating anxiety, and fostering relaxation through the utilization of strategies such as:

- Distraction Techniques

Distraction tactics encompass the use of engaging activities or sensory stimuli to shift the child's attention away from stimuli that cause pain. Nurses can employ age-appropriate diversions, such as interactive games, handheld electronic devices, storytelling, or music therapy, to divert children patients' attention away from painful treatments. Distraction strategies can effectively diminish pain perception and anxiety in children by actively using their senses and imagination.

- Relaxation Therapy

According to (dos Santos Felix et al., 2019) relaxation therapies, such as deep breathing exercises, guided imagery, and progressive muscle relaxation, are used to promote a state of peace and decrease muscle tension in pediatric patients. Nurses have the ability to instruct children in relaxation techniques and motivate them to engage in these exercises prior to and during painful medical procedures. Relaxation



treatment improves the child's ability to handle pain-related suffering by developing coping abilities.

- Therapeutic Play

Therapeutic play interventions utilize play activities to facilitate emotional expression, communication, and coping in young patients. Nurses have the ability to offer toys, games, and art supplies that are suitable for a child's age in order to stimulate the expression of their emotions and anxieties regarding pain. Therapeutic play enables children to develop a feeling of authority, proficiency, and influence over their encounters with pain.

Nurses can optimize the efficacy of non-pharmacological pain treatment techniques by establishing a nurturing and tranquil setting, offering motivation and comfort, and actively involving children in diverting, relaxing, and recreational pursuits. In addition, nurses work together with the interdisciplinary team to incorporate non-pharmacological therapies into complete pain management regimens and assess their effect on pain outcomes and patient satisfaction.

### **5. Efficacy of Nursing Interventions in Promoting Pain Management Among Pediatric Patients**

Managing pain in pediatric patients continues to be a substantial obstacle in the healthcare field, necessitating customized therapies to meet the distinct requirements of children who are in pain. Nurses have a key role in carrying out several therapies that aim to provide pain alleviation and improve the overall well-being of pediatric patients.

Manworren & Stinson (2016) have shown that pain assessment conducted by nurses are useful in accurately determining the severity, location, and distress related with pain in children. According to (Andersen, 2018) age-appropriate pain assessment tools, such as self-report scales, observational scales, and behavioral assessment tools, allow nurses to gather thorough pain evaluations and customize interventions based on the specific needs of each patient.

Pharmacological therapies play a crucial role in nursing care when it comes to managing pain in pediatric patients. Smeland et al., (2018) suggest that nurses have a crucial responsibility in giving analgesic drugs to pediatric patients and overseeing their efficacy and adverse reactions. Research (Duncan et al., 2019) has indicated that when nurses take the lead in administering pain medicine, it results in better pain management, less usage of opioids, and increased satisfaction among patients.

Non-pharmacological therapies, such as distraction strategies and therapeutic play, have demonstrated efficacy in improving pain alleviation in juvenile patients. Distraction therapies conducted by nurses, such as music therapy, guided imagery, and interactive games, have been linked to decreased pain perception and anxiety during painful operations (Birnie et al., 2014; Pillai Riddell et al., 2011).

Therapeutic play therapies, such as art therapy, play therapy, and therapeutic touch, offer chances for

emotional expression, the development of coping skills, and relaxation. These interventions ultimately contribute to better pain outcomes (Duke, 2022).

Moreover, Alotaibi et al., (2018) have demonstrated that educational efforts conducted by nurses for patients and their families might improve the effectiveness of pain management in pediatric patients. Research has shown that educating patients and their families on pain management techniques, medication administration, and coping strategies enhances pain relief, medication adherence, and overall satisfaction with care (Chi et al., 2020). Education initiatives conducted by nurses empower patients and families to actively engage in pain management and advocate for their needs, resulting in improved pain control and quality of life.

## **6. Challenges Faced by Nurses in Promoting Pediatric Pain Management**

There are a lot of obstacles that nurses face when trying to improve pediatric pain management; these make it harder to alleviate pediatric patients' pain and make their suffering worse. To guarantee that children get top-notch care while being as comfortable as possible during their healthcare visits, it is crucial to address these difficulties. When advocating for the management of pediatric pain, nurses often encounter the following difficulties:

- **Communication Barriers**

Pediatric patients, particularly infants and young children, may have limited capacity for communication, which can present difficulties for nurses in accurately assessing and managing their discomfort. Children may encounter difficulties in expressing their pain, which could result in the pain severity being underestimated or misinterpreted.

- **Underestimation of Pain**

There is a prevailing fallacy that infants perceive pain with less intensity than adults or possess a greater pain tolerance. Consequently, the pain experienced by children may not be accurately assessed or effectively managed, resulting in unnecessary agony and anguish. Nurses have the responsibility to support and promote the alleviation of pain in pediatric patients, as well as to guarantee that pain evaluations are carried out regularly and thoroughly (Alotaibi et al., 2018).

- **Fear of Medication Side Effects**

According to (Ismail, 2016), nurses may be hesitant to provide children with sufficient pain medication due to concerns about the possible side effects of pain drugs, especially opioids. Inadequate pain management results may occur when doctors and patients are afraid of sedation, respiratory depression, or developing a dependency on opioids in the long run. To address these issues and safely apply evidence-based approaches to pain medication delivery, nurses require education and assistance.

- Lack of Resources and Support

Nurses may face challenges in providing effective pain relief to children patients due to factors such as limited access to specialized pediatric pain management services, poor staffing levels, and inadequate resources. It might be challenging for nurses to provide adequate care for pain management due to time limits, conflicting priorities, and workload pressures. To enhance pediatric pain management methods and remove systemic hurdles, interdisciplinary collaboration and advocacy activities are needed.

### **7. Strategies to Overcome Challenges in Pediatric Pain Management**

The management of pain in children poses distinct challenges and intricacies that necessitate a comprehensive approach for efficient resolution. Nurses, as primary caregivers on the front lines, have a crucial role in reducing pain and enhancing the overall health of pediatric patients. Nevertheless, they frequently face a multitude of obstacles and hindrances when it comes to providing the most effective pain management treatment. The following examines strategies to address these difficulties and improve pediatric pain treatment practices.

An effective strategy to address difficulties in managing pain in children is by implementing educational and training programs specifically designed for nurses. Equipping nurses with extensive education on pediatric pain evaluation, treatment approaches, and communication skills empowers them with the necessary knowledge and confidence to effectively handle pain in pediatric patients (Achaliwie, 2021). Nurses can improve their skill in using age-appropriate pain assessment instruments and executing evidence-based therapies through continuing education programs, workshops, and simulation training.

Interdisciplinary collaboration is a strategy approach for enhancing pediatric pain management. Interdisciplinary teams can create complete pain treatment programs tailored to each child's specific requirements by promoting collaborations among healthcare professionals, such as physicians, pharmacists, psychologists, and child life specialists. Collaborative care models facilitate the exchange of information, coordination of interventions, and comprehensive approaches to pain management, leading to enhanced results for pediatric patients.

According to (Ethier, 2019), nurses can effectively manage pain by integrating pharmaceutical interventions with non-pharmacological therapies, enabling them to approach pain therapy from many angles and customize treatment programs to suit each patient's specific requirements. Comprehensive pain management strategies may involve the administration of analgesic drugs, such as acetaminophen or opioids, in conjunction with complementary therapies like distraction tactics, therapeutic play, and relaxation exercises.

Kahsay (2017) asserted that, comprehensive pediatric pain treatment solutions necessitate the inclusion of patient and family education as crucial components. Nurses empower pediatric patients and their families by offering knowledge and support, enabling them to actively engage in pain management and

advocate for their child's needs. Providing families with information on pain management approaches, how to administer medication, and the possible adverse effects can enhance drug adherence and facilitate seamless care coordination across different healthcare settings.

In healthcare organizations, the designation of pain champions can also assist in overcoming obstacles to pediatric pain management. These professionals act as proponents of optimal approaches in pain management, spearhead endeavors to enhance quality, and offer assistance and direction to their colleagues in the healthcare industry. Pain champions are of paramount importance in healthcare organizations as they actively foster a culture of excellence in pain management and propel endeavors for ongoing enhancement.

### **Conclusion**

Pain is a condition that cannot be addressed exclusively; it requires a comprehensive strategy and care in order to achieve the best possible outcome. Not only medical doctors, but also all healthcare professionals such as nurses, physiotherapists, psychologists, etc., must contribute in order to achieve a substantial influence in controlling pain, particularly in children. In addition to medical doctors, nurse practitioners play a crucial role in pain management, as they have more frequent contact with patients and are therefore more exposed to their needs. Moreover, pain in youngsters is often undertreated, which is a form of defiance. Frequent evaluation and reevaluation of juvenile pain symptoms might lead to optimal results in pain management. Hence, nurses should be aware of the vital role they play in pain assessment and management, and they should stay motivated and educated about the latest techniques and updates in pain evaluation and management.

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