



Comfort

Pain Assessment

Overview

This module describes a simple approach to pain assessment that focuses on the following questions:

- who is the person with the pain?
- what is the type of pain experienced by this person?
- what should be assessed in critical and noncritical situations?
- when should pain assessments be conducted?
- how should a pain assessment be conducted?
- how should a pain assessment be documented and communicated to other members of the care team?
- how should pain data be used to make clinical decisions about pain management?

Pain is a multidimensional phenomenon with five components: affective, behavioral, cognitive, sensory, and physiologic. For simplicity, these components are described as the ABCs of pain. The emotions related to the pain (affective component), the behavioral responses to the pain (behavioral component), the beliefs, attitudes, evaluations, and goals about the pain and pain control (cognitive component) all alter how the pain is perceived (sensory component) by modifying the transmission of nociceptive stimuli to the brain (physiologic component). Nurses must understand each dimension in order to assess pain and to make nursing decisions based on that assessment and knowledge of the neural mechanism of pain.