



Persistent Severe Pain In US Nursing Homes

Joan M Teno, M.D., M.S.

Sherry Weitzen, M.S., M.H.A.

Terrie Wetle, Ph.D.

Vincent Mor, Ph.D.

Center for Gerontology and Health
Care Research, Brown University



Nursing Homes

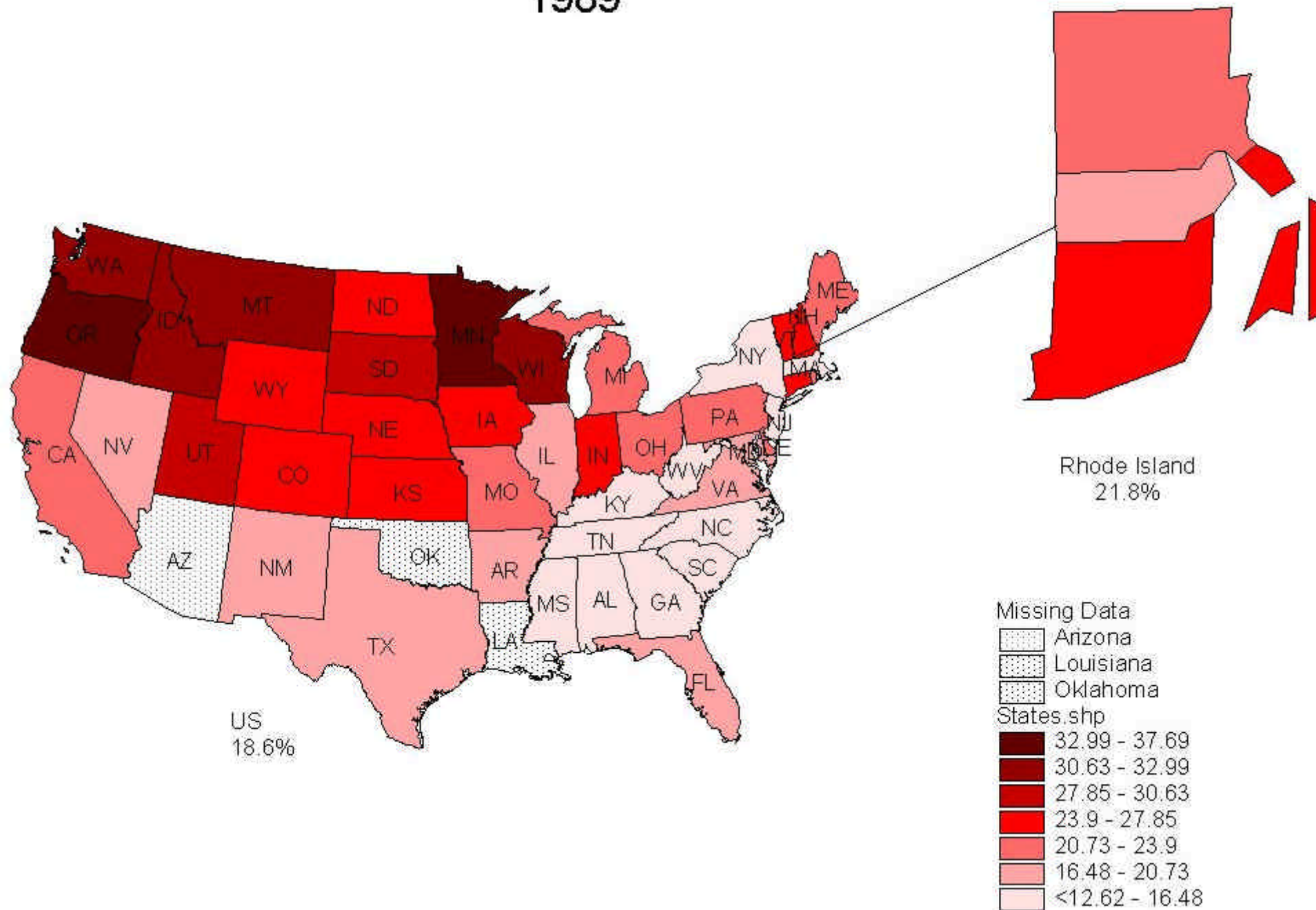
- On a given day, 1.5 million Americans are in a nursing home.
- Nearly one in two persons who lives to his/her 80s will spend time in a nursing home prior to death.
- Federal policy in the 1980s has resulted in shorter hospital stays and increased use of nursing homes.



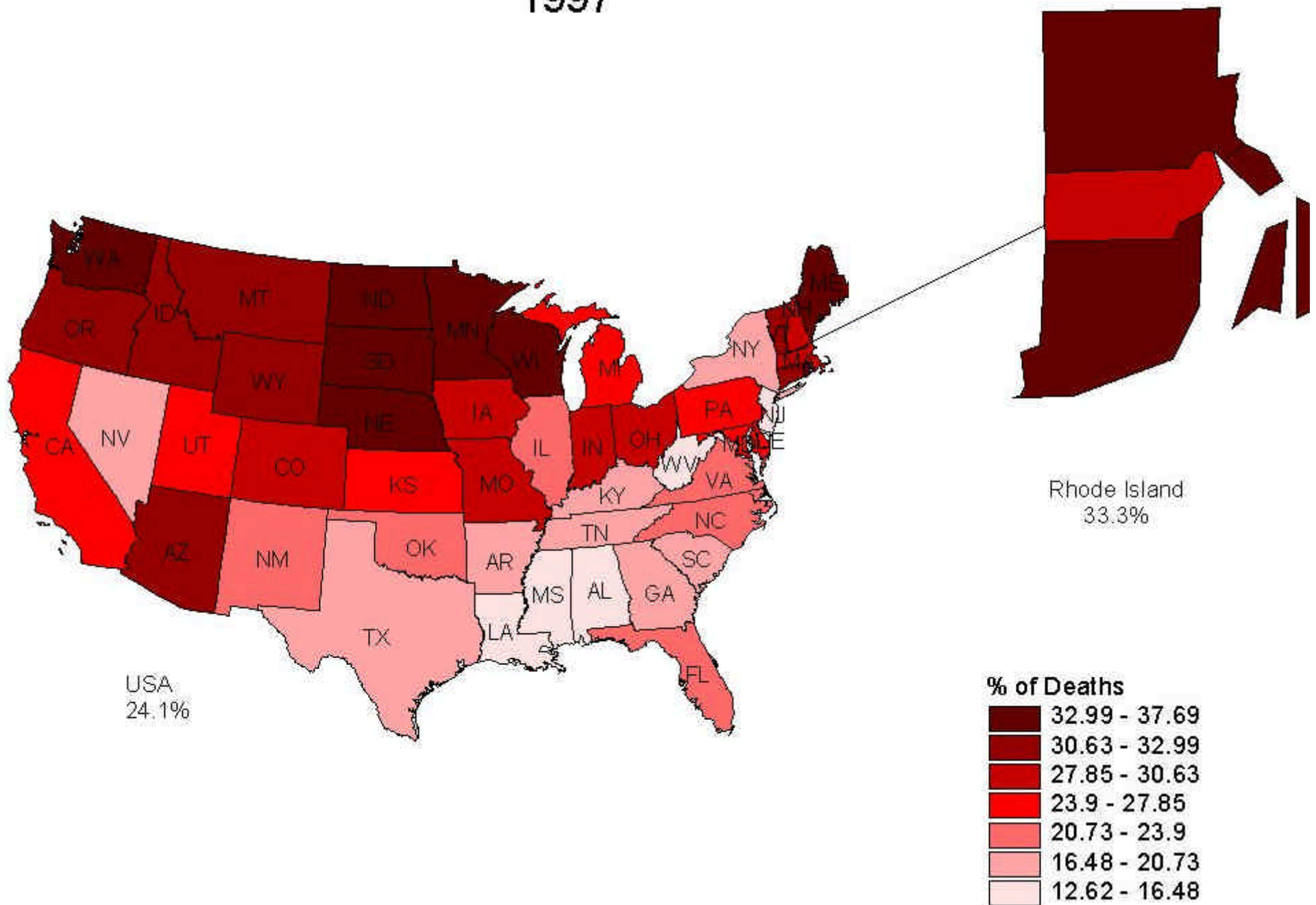
Nursing Homes (2)

- By 2020, it has been estimated that 40% of Americans will die in nursing homes (Brock and Foley).
- Already, some states have nearly 40% of Americans dying in nursing homes.

Proportion of Deaths Occurring in Nursing Homes 1989



Proportion of Deaths Occurring in Nursing Homes 1997





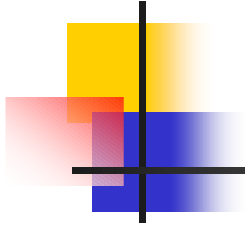
STATES - Dying in Nursing Homes

TOP SIX STATES

- Minnesota
- Nebraska
- Wisconsin
- South Dakota
- Washington
- Rhode Island

BOTTOM FIVE STATES

- Hawaii
- Mississippi
- Washington, D.C.
- Louisiana
- Alabama



Are Nursing Homes ready to care
for a frail, older, dying
population?



Pain

- As many as 83% of nursing home residents experience pain that impairs mobility, may cause depression, and diminishes quality of life.
- Recent research has found that pain is often unrecognized and not treated by health care providers.



Pain Management in Nursing Homes

- A 1998 JAMA study found that 40% of cancer patients discharged to a nursing home had daily pain.
- Of those in pain, one in four did not have any analgesic proscribed... NOT EVEN Acetaminophen.



NEW JAMA Research Study

- Examines pain management in all U.S. nursing homes in 1999 using the federally required Minimum Data Set, that collects information on the frequency (daily or less than daily) and severity (none, mild, moderate, or excruciating) of pain at admission and quarterly



Persistent Pain –JAMA 4/25/01

This study found that 41.2% of persons who had pain at their first assessment (within 60 days of April, 1999) also had either moderate daily pain or an excruciating level of pain at their next assessment (completed 60-180 days later).

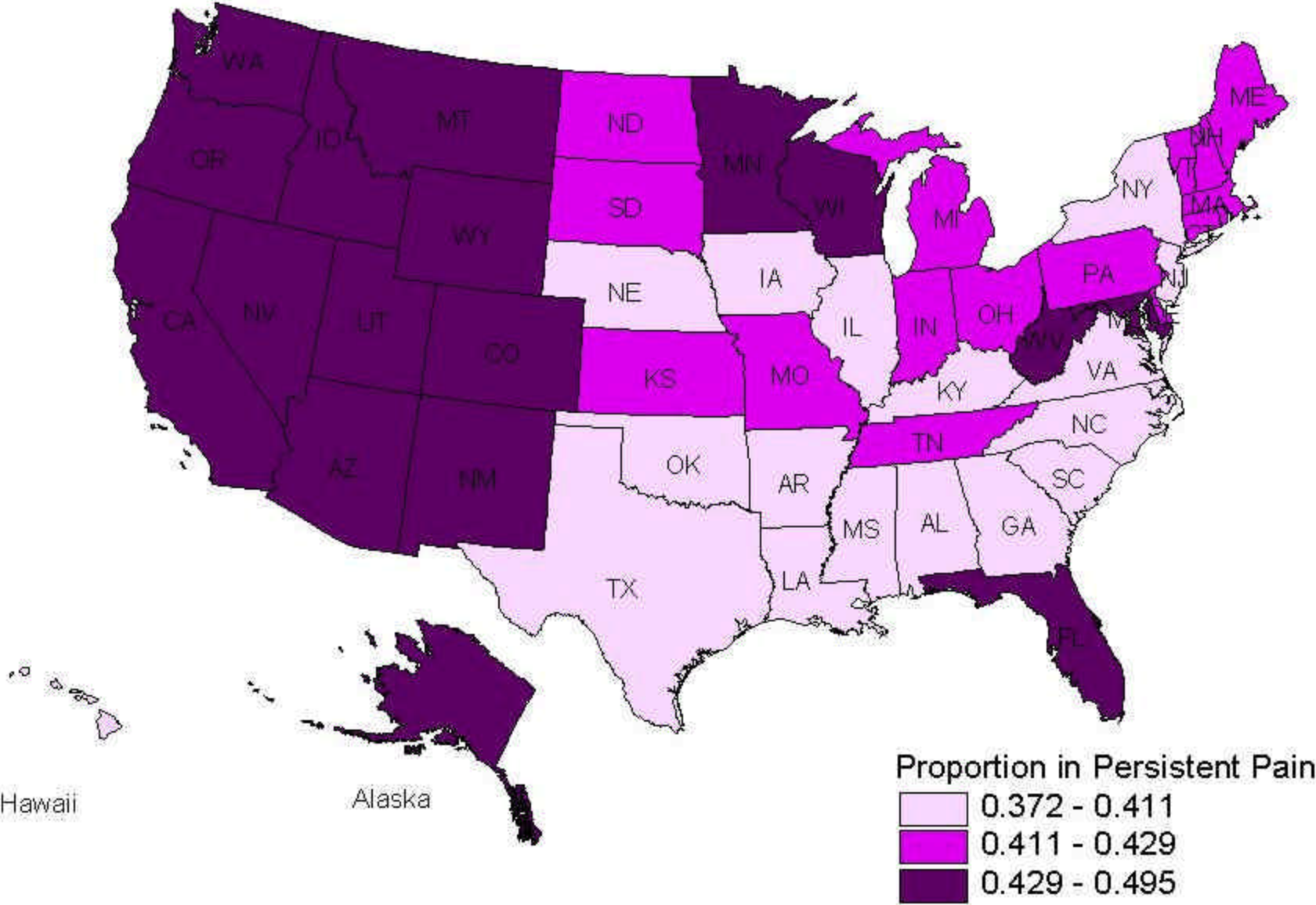
Of those persons with two MDS assessments, ONE in SEVEN were in persistent severe pain.



Persistent Pain –JAMA 4/25/01

- The rate of persistent pain recorded in states varied from 37.7% to 49.5%. Yet, the majority of states were near 40%. (See next figure)

Rate of Persistent Pain in US Nursing Homes





Implications

- Urgent need to improve pain management for this frail, older population



Misperceptions about Pain

- Pain is normal aging.
- We must bear pain.
- Pain is punishment for past actions.
- Cognitively impaired persons have a high tolerance for pain.
- Elderly persons are likely to become addicted to pain medications.
- Pain means that death is near.



Why is it Important to Focus on Pain?

- Pain is a symptom most expected and most feared by dying patients.
- Unrelieved pain can have enormous physiological and psychological effects on patients and their loved ones.
- Pain negatively affects quality of life by impairing daily functions, social relationships, sleep and/or self worth.



Patient and Family Experience of Pain

- Pain is an experience that is highly individualized and multidimensional.
- The patient's and family's account of their pain experience is the most valuable tool available to the clinician.
- Avoid assumptions - not all patients want to be completely pain free.
- Listen carefully for clues about the meaning of pain and observe for emotional responses, as they tell of their experiences.



What do the Experts Say About Pain Management?

- Achieving excellent practice in pain management requires an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach that is patient and family centered.
- It is important to identify basic principles to guide practices in your clinical setting.
- There are numerous guidelines available from organizations dedicated to improving management of pain.



Principles of Pain Management

- Keep the patient in control.
- Focus on patients and their loved ones.
- Utilize a team approach.
- Assess patients in the context of their Total Pain experience.
- Employ multiple methods appropriate for the patient.
- Treat other symptoms and side effects.
- Assess, reassess and reassess again!



ABCs of Pain Assessment

- **A**sk about and **A**ssess pain regularly.
- **B**elieve the patient and family in their reports of pain and what relieves it.
- **C**hoose pain control options appropriate for the patient, family, and setting.
- **D**eliver interventions in a timely, logical, and coordinated fashion
- **E**mpower patients and families. **E**nable them with as much control as possible.