

Chronic Pain in Older Adults



Mark C. Bicket, MD*, Jianren Mao, MD, PhD

KEYWORDS

- Chronic pain • Persistent pain • Older adults • Geriatrics • Pain management
- Pain clinics • Aging • Aged

KEY POINTS

- Chronic pain ranks among one of the most common, costly, and incapacitating conditions in later life.
- Chronic pain does not constitute part of the normal aging process, contrary to beliefs among the public and physicians that pain is an unavoidable consequence of getting older.
- Increasing age causes physiologic abnormalities including an increase in pain threshold, a decrease in pain tolerance, and alterations in pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics that increase the risk of side effects from pharmacologic treatment.
- Unique features to pain assessment in older adults include the likelihood of multiple diagnoses contributing to chronic pain, the ability to use self-report in older adults including most who have mild to moderate cognitive impairment, and the recognition that older adults with cognitive impairment may demonstrate a variety of behaviors to communicate pain.
- The management of chronic pain in older adults is best accomplished through a multimodal approach, including pharmacologic and nonpharmacologic treatments, physical rehabilitation, and psychological therapies. Interventional pain therapies may be appropriate in select older adults and may reduce the need for pharmacologic treatments.

INTRODUCTION

Chronic pain ranks among one of the most common, costly, and incapacitating conditions in later life.¹ Although the prevalence of acute pain remains similar across the adult years of life, the prevalence of chronic pain increases in an age-related manner

Disclosure: The authors have no financial conflicts of interest to disclose.

Department of Anesthesia, Critical Care, and Pain Medicine, Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Wang Ambulatory Care Center, 55 Fruit Street Gray-Bigelow 444, Boston, MA 02114, USA

* Corresponding author. Wang Ambulatory Care Center, Suite 340, 15 Parkman Street, Boston, MA 02114.

E-mail address: mbicket@partners.org

Anesthesiology Clin 33 (2015) 577–590

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.anclin.2015.05.011>

anesthesiology.theclinics.com

1932-2275/15/\$ – see front matter © 2015 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

up to at least the seventh decade^{2,3} but seems to plateau among age groups older than 65 when adjusting for other comorbidities and characteristics.⁴

Painful conditions are one of the most common reasons that older persons seek health care in the ambulatory setting (**Box 1**).⁵ Arthritis-related diagnoses stand atop the list of painful conditions affecting older adults, as more older adults report low back pain in comparison with adults 18 years of age or older (**Fig. 1**). Prescription medication use for pain is higher among adults 65 years of age or older than in younger persons, and the percentage of older adults on at least 1 prescription medication for pain increased at a faster rate over the past 2 decades in comparison with other age groups (**Fig. 2**). Bothersome pains in older persons disproportionately affect women more than men, and more than 50% of community-dwelling older persons report such pain on a regular basis.⁴ In the residential care setting, more than 80% of nursing home residents report chronic pain.⁶

Chronic pain does not constitute part of the normal aging process, contrary to beliefs among the public and physicians that pain is an unavoidable consequence of getting older.^{7,8} Despite its high prevalence, pain among older persons is almost always the result of pathology involving a physical or psychological process. Combating the myth and misunderstanding that “pain is inevitable with aging” represents one of the educational challenges to permit a cultural transformation of the approach to pain treatment in older persons.^{1,9}

AGE-RELATED DIFFERENCES RELEVANT TO PAIN

Changes in pain perception among older adults result from an aging process that affects functioning at the cellular, tissue, organ, system, and population levels. Some underlying processes seem similar across all older adults, but aging is not a uniform process. Older persons demonstrate significant variation among individual responses to aging.¹⁰ The heterogeneity that exists among the physiologic,

Box 1

Common causes of chronic pain in older persons

- Arthritis and related arthritides
 - Osteoarthritis
 - Rheumatoid arthritis
- Spinal canal stenosis
- Diabetic peripheral neuropathy
- Trigeminal neuralgia
- Postherpetic neuralgia (shingles)
- Cancer-related pain
 - Chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy
 - Radiation-induced neuropathy
- Peripheral vascular disease
- Central poststroke pain
- Myofascial pain
- Fibromyalgia
- Postsurgical pain

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/2744457>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/2744457>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)