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CLINICAL INFORMATION

Optimizing post-operative pain management in Latin America

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Abstract Post-operative pain management is a significant problem in clinical practice in Latin America. Insufficient or inappropriate pain management is in large part due to insufficient knowledge, attitudes and education, and poor communications at various levels. In addition, the lack of awareness of the availability and importance of clear policies and guidelines for recording pain intensity, the use of specific analgesics and the proper approach to patient education have led to the consistent under-treatment of pain management in the region. However, these problems are not insurmountable and can be addressed at both the provider and patient level. Robust policies and guidelines can help insure continuity of care and reduce unnecessary variations in practice. The objective of this paper is to call attention to the problems associated with Acute Post-Operative Pain (APOP) and to suggest recommendations for their solutions in Latin America. A group of experts on anesthesiology, surgery and pain developed recommendations that will lead to more efficient and effective pain management. It will be necessary to change the knowledge and behavior of health professionals and patients, and to obtain a commitment of policy makers. Success will depend on a positive attitude and the commitment of each party through the development of policies, programs and the promotion of a more efficient and effective system for the delivery of APOP services as recommended by the authors of this paper. The writing group believes that implementation of these recommendations should significantly enhance efficient and effective post-operative pain management in Latin America. © 2016 Sociedade Brasileira de Anestesiologia. Published by Elsevier Editora Ltda. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

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PALAVRAS CHAVE

Dor aguda no
pós-operatório;
Controle da dor;
América Latina;
Dor crônica

Otimizar o controle da dor no pós-operatório na América Latina

Resumo O controle da dor no período pós-operatório é um problema significativo na prática clínica na América Latina. O controle insuficiente ou inadequado da dor é devido, em grande parte, à insuficiência de conhecimento, atitudes e formação e à comunicação precária em vários níveis. Além disso, a falta de conscientização da disponibilidade e importância de políticas e diretrizes inequívocas para avaliar a intensidade da dor, o uso de analgésicos específicos e a abordagem adequada para instruir o paciente levaram ao subtratamento consistente da dor na região. Contudo, esses problemas não são insuperáveis e podem ser abordados no âmbito tanto do provedor quanto do paciente. Políticas e diretrizes robustas podem ajudar a garantir a continuidade dos cuidados e reduzir as variações desnecessárias na prática. O objetivo deste artigo é chamar a atenção para os problemas associados à dor aguda no pós-operatório (DAPO) e sugerir recomendações para solucioná-los na América Latina. Um grupo de especialistas em anestesiologia, cirurgia e dor desenvolveu recomendações que levarão a um controle mais eficiente e eficaz da dor. Será preciso mudar o conhecimento e o comportamento dos profissionais de saúde e pacientes e obter um compromisso por parte dos decisores políticos. O sucesso dependerá de uma atitude positiva e do compromisso de cada parte através do desenvolvimento de políticas e programas e da promoção de um sistema mais eficiente e eficaz para a prestação de serviços para a DAPO, como recomendado pelos autores deste trabalho. O grupo que as redigiu acredita que a aplicação dessas recomendações deve melhorar de modo significativo a eficiência e eficácia do controle da dor no período pós-operatório na América Latina.

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Introduction

Post-operative pain affects millions of patients world-wide. Pain itself is a highly subjective experience with multiple dimensions. Basically, it is whatever the experiencing person says it is, existing whenever they say it does.^{1,2} Despite this simple and straightforward definition there continues to be barriers to effective pain management. Moreover, it is well-known that poor post-operative pain management not only delays recovery and results in excess morbidity and mortality, but can lead to the development of a chronic pain state which further increases morbidity.³

Many health professionals unfortunately believe that pain is a natural, inevitable, acceptable and harmless consequence of surgery. Common reasons cited for poor pain management include inadequate staff training and knowledge, poor pain assessment, unfamiliarity with the benefits and adverse effects of pain medications and a misguided belief that since post-surgical pain is often temporary and all humans experience pain in life, everyone must “grin and bear it”. Insufficient or inappropriate post-operative pain management is, therefore, a significant problem in clinical practice, but the problem is not at all insurmountable and can be rectified at both the provider and patient level.⁴

Methods

To aid policymakers and regulatory authorities in better understanding the challenges of effective Acute Post-Operative Pain (APOP) management, specifically in Latin America, the Americas Health Foundation convened a group of Latin American experts on anesthesiology, surgery and

pain to develop recommendations that will lead to more efficient and effective pain management.

A comprehensive literature search was performed querying Pub Med, Embase and Scielo for articles related to post-operative pain management in general and post-operative pain management in Latin America. The objective of this paper is to call attention to the problems associated with APOP and to suggest recommendations for their resolution. The authors structured this paper as a response to a series of questions related to the topic. The entire research and writing process was completely independent of any input from the financial sponsor of the effort.

Results

What is the current state of Acute Post-Operative Pain (APOP) management in Latin America and what aspects should receive priority attention?

Pain throughout history has been considered a problem by all its implications. Although in ancient times it was considered an inevitable part of life, today, with the advent of many therapeutic analgesics, APOP should be adequately alleviated. However, this is not the case in Latin America.⁵ Despite recent advances in our understanding of the pathophysiology of pain and more widespread use of minimally invasive surgical techniques, pain after surgical procedures remains a challenge for most physicians.

Pain is very personal and multifactorial. It evokes unpleasant sensations and emotions and is influenced by multiple factors such as: cultural beliefs and values, previous experiences of pain, mood and the coping ability

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