

# The Use of Cognitive Therapies in the Reduction of Pain

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## Introduction

As pain is a frequent complaint of patients in the internal medicine acute care setting, it is important for nursing staff to understand the various interventions that can be used to increase patient satisfaction in regards to pain management. Recent patient satisfaction scores show that current practices are not entirely effective in meeting satisfaction goals for our patients. We wanted to explore non-pharmacological methods that could be used to increase patients overall satisfaction

## PICO

P: Acute care adult patients

I: Cognitive therapies

C: Pharmacologic therapies

O: Reduction in pain

**In the acute care adult patient population, could including cognitive therapies in pain management regimen increase patient satisfaction?**



## Methods

A literature review was conducted using the following search engines:

- Pubmed
- CINAHL

**Key Words:** Cognitive Therapy, Pain, Acute Care, Adults, Nursing

A survey with inpatient RN's was also conducted regarding their opinions and experiences with pain management techniques

## Verbal Survey Results

Majority of RNs responded that their first response to pain would be to offer pharmacologic pain relief measures.

RNs surveyed voiced that pain is individualized and multiple factors go into pain management including:

- Pain tolerance
- Culture
- Age
- Cognitive deficits
- Clinical Picture

## Journal of Clinical Nursing

Design: Qualitative study

- Participants completed an 8-week cognitive therapy program, which included **therapeutic writing assignments, guided conversations, and exercise.**
- Results:
  - Writing promotes insight, thinking, reflection, and discovery about one's chronic pain.
  - Emotional processing is a key component in the recognition and management of one's pain.
  - Patients need to be encouraged to play an active role in managing their pain.

## International Association for the Study of Pain

Design: Randomized controlled trial

- Pain self-management program was introduced to participants which included **goal setting, stretching exercises, discussions about fear-avoidance and practice with communication skills.**
- Results:
  - Participants reported a decrease in pain distress, fear and tendency to catastrophize events related to pain.
  - Limitations: findings cannot be applied to older patients with cognitive deficits.

## Recommendations

- Educate nursing staff on forms of cognitive therapy helpful in reducing pain
- Acquire physical materials used in cognitive therapy (i.e. journals, music) to be kept on unit
- Assess patients on admission to unit for appropriateness of cognitive therapy for pain control
- Evaluate future Press-Ganey patient satisfaction scores for improvement in scores related to pain management

## References

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