Pain Management in Subarachnoid Hemorrhage Patients
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Introduction
Subarachnoid hemorrhage (SAH) is a condition frequently associated with intense and persistent headache pain. Due to distinctive aspects in assessment, medication selection, and patient education for this population, SAH pain presents a unique challenge for nurses and the entire healthcare team.

PICO Question
Population: SAH patients experiencing pain
Intervention: Patient education on pain management practices in aneurysmal SAH
Comparison: Studies that focus on acute pain in the adult population
Outcome: Patient perceptions of control, and pain severity and patient satisfaction.

Methods
A literature search was performed using CINAHL, EbscoHost, and PubMed databases.

Key Words: acute pain, patient education, pain management, subarachnoid hemorrhage

Inclusion Criteria: Articles addressing SAH pain, education and pain perception, and nurses role in pain management were included. The initial search yielded 1,754 articles, which was narrowed to six articles.

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Binhas, M., et al. (2006)</td>
<td>Attending physicians at French neurosurgical centers answered questionnaires about pain management for SAH patients at their respective facilities</td>
<td>The majority of respondents expressed that this patient population is not receiving optimal pain relief and recommended a dedicated pain scale be developed.</td>
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<td>Mahon, P. et al. (2012)</td>
<td>Comprehensive literature review of headache management practices in aneurysmal SAH patients</td>
<td>Unattended pain can exacerbate SAH symptoms including hypertension, increased cerebral blood flow, oxygen consumption, and intracranial pressure. Lack of data suggests SAH pain is under-assessed and under-managed.</td>
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<td>Pellino, T.A., &amp; Ward, S.E. (1998)</td>
<td>Elective inpatient surgery patients completed questionnaires assessing amount of pain experienced, perceptions of control, and pain management satisfaction</td>
<td>Patients reported greater satisfaction with pain control when they believed to have control over the pain. Perceived control over pain mediates the relationship between pain severity and patient satisfaction.</td>
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Discussion
Literature shows that pain management in SAH patients is difficult, under-studied, and inadequate; A survey of nurses in Penn State Hershey Medical Center’s NCCU reveals similar results. While pain management is influenced by multiple disciplines, nurses are in a distinctive position to affect patients’ pain from many approaches. Through frequent and thorough pain assessments, appropriate use of pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic treatments, planned nursing care, familiarity with pain scales, and patient education, nurses may be able to decrease perceptions and severity of pain in SAH patients.

Conclusions
Pain associated with SAH is often severe and can lead to poor patient, family, and nurse satisfaction and possibly increase complications. Current SAH pain management practices are insufficient and warrant change. An increase in nurses’ awareness of their critical role in pain management and knowledge of pain management techniques may facilitate an improvement in the SAH pain experience and overall quality of care in this patient population.

References