

OASIS Alert

Assessment: Dig Deeper to Gather Pain Details

Increase your vocabulary to help patients describe their pain.

Getting an accurate picture of the pain your patient experiences isn't always easy. Embarrassment, fear, and cultural mores can work against you. Keep these tips in mind to gain a deeper understanding of your patient's pain -- and earn up to 4 clinical points.

There are several important steps to consider when determining the most accurate answer to M1242 -- Frequency of Pain Interfering with patient's activity or movement. First and foremost, check the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services'** OASIS Guidance Manual for instructions on answering this item, says **Pat Jump**, with Rice Lake, Wis.-based **Acorn's End Training & Consulting**.

Next, familiarize yourself with words you can use to help the client better articulate pain, Jump says. Words commonly used for pain include tingling, sharp, throbbing, numb, cold, burning, searing, stinging, intense, shooting, dull, steady, stabbing, aching, radiating, pricking, pressing, deep, gnawing, and rubbing.

Remember to explore not only the intensity of the pain but also the location, description, duration, aggravating and alleviating factors and also how the pain affects physical and social functioning, Jump says.

Jump suggests these additional steps for accurate pain assessment:

- Compare the client's pain to that of a normal healthy adult.
- Consider cultural factors. For example, some cultures put a value on being stoic about pain, and others believe in a reward in the afterlife for enduring pain. Being aware of such beliefs can help you to more accurately assess a patient's pain.
- Remember that pain interferes with activity if it alters physical activity but also if an activity is performed less often than desired, if additional assistance is needed to complete an activity, and if an activity takes longer because of the presence of pain.
- Probe for the presence of pain and pain consequences whenever a client takes prescription or over-the-counter pain medications.
- Specifically ask the client, "If you didn't have pain, what other activities would you do?"
- Monitor for non-verbal signs of pain such as increased heart or respiratory rate, pallor, irritability, or perspiration.
- Anticipate the presence of pain with certain diagnoses such as joint disease.
- Ask how pain affects daily life " the ability to go into the community, its affect on relationships, etc.