

# A Pilot Program to Increase RN Education Regarding Narcotic Use

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## Background

- Fear of narcotics use have shown to cause significant barriers to patient care.
- RN's have the ability to make safety-conscious decisions to help their patients' pain.
- RN's should have a greater education regarding narcotics in order to help them listen to their patients in an unbiased manner and not allow the RN's own apprehensions to affect patient care.

## Practice Change

To implement extra teaching regarding narcotics and pain control for RN's from all walks of life, in order to decrease RN's apprehension and increase awareness of pain and effective treatment measures.

## Methods

- Surveyed RN's current level of knowledge regarding pain scale, narcotic usage, and contributors to Narcotic abuse.
- Conduct education in staff meeting, hang flyers, and send out newsletter via email with teaching tool.
- Survey staff level of knowledge post-education regarding pain scale, narcotic usage, and contributors to narcotic abuse.

## Measures and Results

### Pre and Post Survey Questionnaire:

1. How knowledgeable of pain medications/narcotics are you? Please rate on a scale from 1 to 5

2. How comfortable do you feel administering pain medications to oncologic patients? Please rate on a scale from 1 to 5.

3. How comfortable are you with educating oncologic patients on use, safety, side effects etc. of narcotics? Please rate on a scale from 1 to 5.

## Results

### Demographics

8 People responded to our first survey.  
4 People responded to our post-education survey.

### Screening Results

87.5% of RN's felt they could use more information to become more knowledgeable on narcotics. 50% of RN's felt completely comfortable administering narcotics to cancer patients. 62.5% felt that they could be more comfortable with educating cancer patients on narcotic side effects.

100% of RN's who replied to the post-education survey stated that while they knew the information, a refresher helped them be more comfortable in their practicing methods.

## Summary/Discussion

- Not every RN comes from the same culture/background and therefore may bring presuppositions that affect their use of narcotics and how they receive education on that process.
- Few RN's are willing to complete surveys without direct personal encouragement.
- Narcotics are essential to patient pain relief
- Narcotics have side effects and can lead to tolerance which requires special long-term monitoring in some instances.



## Conclusion

- RN's are under-educated regarding narcotics and their effects on the human body.
- Education brings empowerment.
- Narcotics stigma is real but should not have an impact on patient care.

### References

Hartling, B., Hasler S., Abrams R., Odwazny R., and McNutt R. (2008). *Computer-based Simulation as a Teaching Tool for Residents Treating Patients with Cancer-Related Pain Crises*. Quality Managed Health Care.

Ulster Med J. (2011). The Challenges of Cancer Pain Assessment and Management, 80(2): 104.