

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Pain Curriculum

Year 1

Introduction to Clinical Medicine course teaches interviewing and communication skills in a case based approach. Several cases use pain as the proto-typical symptom or complaint. Students learn to assess a complaint of pain as to its onset, palliative and provocative factors, quality, location and radiation pattern, temporal characteristics and severity. In assessing severity the use of the 1-10 self reporting scale, along with its advantages and pitfalls is presented.

A voluntary co-curricular program provides for shadowing experiences for first and second year students. In recent years, about one fifth of our students have elected to shadow palliative care doctors.

Year 2

The Intro to Clinical Medicine course covers a variety of “End of Life” issues. Pain as a prevalent symptom at EOL is covered.

In the hematology unit of pathophysiology, our sickle cell disease expert covers the issue of pain and pain management in relation to SCD and in general. In the latter part of year 2, imbedded in the Physical Diagnosis section of Clinical Medicine, a didactic on pain assessment and treatment is given. This follows and is coordinated with the lecture on opioids given in the pharmacology course. At this point in the curriculum, right before they begin their clinical rotations as third year students, the pain didactic covers issues of prevalence of pain, importance of pain assessment, barriers to effective pain management – including patient, physician and societal issues, and clinical pearls of pharmacological and non-pharmacological pain management.

Year 3

In the junior year, students rotate at a variety of in-patient and out-patient settings. There is no specific, central, universal curriculum on pain management during this year. We will address the implications of the third year experience on the overall pain curriculum a little later.

Year 4

During the required Ambulatory Medicine clerkship, students attend weekly seminars on End of Life care. This curriculum is largely based on the AMA’s Educating Physicians on End of Life Care curriculum. There are several palliative medicine/EOL experts on our faculty who teach these seminars. Physical symptom management is a prominent part of this curriculum. Pain management comprises about one fourth of the seminar time.

This fourth year clerkship was chosen to incorporate the EOL and pain curriculum for several reasons: All students take the clerkship, therefore the curriculum can be delivered in a uniform manner to all students; it can be delivered in relatively small group setting; the students have had a broad clinical experience and we draw upon that in teaching the specific topics in EOL/pain.

There is also a Palliative Medicine elective available to seniors.

Pitfalls and drawbacks

Although we believe we provide a very broad and comprehensive curriculum in pain management, certainly more than was done 5 years ago – which was virtually nothing, there are some pitfalls. In the third year, students work with a tremendous number and variety of clinical faculty in many sites (which is in many ways a positive aspect of our school). Undoubtedly, the role models, both residents and faculty that students learn from, have a varied level of expertise and indeed various attitudes about pain assessment and management. In fact, we are certain that there are instances of negative reinforcement of students previously learned skills and attitudes about pain. We work hard to turn this potential negative into a positive, when we cover pain management in the senior seminars.

Other avenues that impact student exposure to pain management education

The four main hospitals at which students rotate have faculty run Palliative Care consult services. The core palliative care faculty are recognized by the students and more and more are sought out for formal and informal consultations.

Outcomes and effectiveness

We have demonstrated that students have short term retention and ability to use pain management strategies in problem solving. However, we don't really know the long term impact of our efforts on our graduates' performance in residencies and in practice. We would like to study this. We do have some evidence of positive outcomes in our students who do residencies with us.

Graduate Medical Education

All WSU Internal Medicine interns receive the mini EPEC curriculum, similar to what we deliver to the senior students. And again, the residents are familiar with the faculty who have expertise in palliative care and seek them out for consultations and discussions. We are offering this course to other specialties.

CAPE Wayne

In 2005, with seed money from the Dean, we started the WSU Center to Advance Palliative Care Excellence. Dr. Robert Zalenski is the Center's director. Four associate directors head up sections on education, research, clinical practice and humanities. This center fosters collaboration between clinicians, social scientists and others to advance the field of palliative care in all four realms. There is strong support for this center at the school and University level. We are presenting our first regional conference in October 2007. This is open to folks of all disciplines and features several sessions on pain management.

Fellowship

The palliative medicine faculty established a fellowship in Hospice and Palliative Medicine in 2005. We successfully trained two fellows so far. The first is board certified and in full-time practice in Palliative Medicine. Last year we trained one of only three pediatricians in the country training in palliative medicine. She currently works full time at Children's Hospital of Michigan and with a pediatric hospice program. This year, we have three fellows. One of them is a staff VA physician whom we are training at the request of the Veteran's Administration so that he can establish a palliative care program in Northern Indiana and further advance the VA's commitment to palliative care in their system. We are particularly proud of this contribution to our vets.

The fellows are becoming an integral part of our education efforts that will impact students and residents of multiple specialties.

CME

Annual Pain Awareness Symposium – Jointly sponsored by Detroit medical Center and Wayne State University. This is a day long symposium with several local and national experts presenting speakers. Attracts mostly nurses, but is open to physicians. (CME for MD's through WSU)

CAPEWayne, along with Henry Ford Health System and Hospice of Michigan is hosting a first annual regional conference on Palliative Care, October 12, 2007. This is a conference for members of all disciplines involved in palliative and End of Life care. Sessions will provide basic instruction in various topics including pain management as well as current research presentations.