



**Our Lady
of Peace**

HOSPICE & HOME HEALTH CARE



PAIN MANAGEMENT IN *hospice*

Our Lady of Peace Education Series

If you've had a terminally ill loved one, you know how important it is to manage their pain and keep them comfortable. It's common for people to enter hospice without preparation, resulting in many questions on multiple subjects, including pain management. With this in mind, Our Lady of Peace Hospice & Home Health Care would like to share some information that we hope will be helpful to you if someone you love enters hospice. This information is based on how we care for patients with a commitment to giving them the highest quality of life possible.

6 Things You Should Know about Pain Management in Hospice

1. PAIN MANAGEMENT SHOULD BE A TOP PRIORITY FOR TERMINALLY ILL PEOPLE

Pain management is an essential goal, and it's a top priority in hospice. It's important for doctors and nurses to look at the total person to assess their needs and how they can be met. We're able to use medications within Our Lady of Peace residential hospice that may not be routinely used in other places. This is due to 24-hour staffing of nurses who are able to watch closely for side effects.

2. IT'S OFTEN NECESSARY TO TREAT PAIN WITH MULTIPLE MEDICATIONS

Morphine, Fentanyl, Dilaudid, Norco, Oxycodone, and Hydrocodone are frequently recognized pain medications. These drugs work on the Mu Opioid Receptor, so they work well for acute kinds of pain like broken bones and stitches. However, neuropathic (nerve) pain is common with cancer, triggering the nerves inside the organs, head, neck, abdomen, and bones. About 40% of the time, morphine-like drugs work to ease this kind of pain, but patients have to take a lot more of it. And, there's a high percentage of people who still don't get relief, but they do get the side effects of sedation and constipation. This is why Our Lady of Peace often replaces these medications with small doses of Methadone to relieve the awful neuropathic pain, and it's very effective.

3. METHADONE IS AN EFFECTIVE AND SAFE MEDICATION TO USE IN HOSPICE

It's common for patients and families to be concerned about Methadone at first because of its use as a treatment for opioid addiction. Because of our expertise, we can safely use it in hospice – at a much lower dose, it is safe. It works on the Mu Opioid Receptor, but also the NMDA receptor, which is the neuropathic pain stimulator. Patients get much better pain relief when we block the NMDA receptor as well.

4. SOMETIMES IT'S BEST TO TAKE PATIENTS OFF PREVIOUS MEDICATION WHEN THEY ENTER HOSPICE

It's not uncommon for patients to come to us having experienced other serious illnesses and on medications that are no longer useful or appropriate in a hospice setting. In many cases, they are no longer effective, or they may interact with pain medications; your old medications may cause more side effects as your medical situation changes. Our pharmacist reviews each patient's medications and advises patients, families, and our medical team.

5. IT'S COMMON FOR MULTIPLE MEDICATIONS TO BE USED AT ONE TIME

The drugs we use are designed to interact with different receptors in the body, so sometimes it's necessary to use multiple medications. Our medical staff and pharmacist work together to find the best combination to bring symptom relief, based on the individual needs of each patient, and they can make rapid adjustments as necessary, to manage symptoms. Make sure this is the case in whatever hospice you choose.

6. CONFUSION AND DEPRESSION CAN OCCUR NEAR END OF LIFE

Beyond physical symptoms, there are psychological and emotional pieces that contribute to how patients feel. We use medication called Ketamine to get even more control over neuropathic pain. Ketamine is also very effective in treating depression. We've had patients at OLP who have been severely depressed and not talking, and with a single dose of ketamine, their depression is relieved in just a couple days.

It's critical for patients and families to understand the purpose of the medications administered in hospice, and why they are sometimes combined to combat pain. At Our Lady of Peace, we work together to provide the highest quality of life for patients and families in our care.



We're here for you.

We are passionate about community outreach.
We would love to meet you and discuss how
Our Lady of Peace can be a resource for you.

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