

Continuing Education in Pain Management to be Required

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Inadequate pain relief is a recognized public health problem in Oregon and across the nation. It has been the subject of numerous articles in health journals, the focus of local and national organizations, and widely discussed in health facilities and schools of medicine and nursing.

The inadequate management of pain also was the impetus behind Senate Bill 885, passed in the 2001 Legislative Session, that created the Oregon Pain Management Commission within the Department of Human Services. The Commission consists of 19 members, representing many health disciplines, as well as patients and members of the public. It is charged with developing an education program curriculum for healthcare professionals about pain management, and providing that curriculum to health licensing boards.

The bill also mandated a new pain management continuing education (CE) requirement tied to healthcare provider's license renewals. For nurses in Oregon, this means that all nurses must complete seven hours of CE related to pain management to renew their license.

"It's a one-time only requirement," clarifies OSBN Executive Director Joan Bouchard, RN, MSN. "Although the Board always encourages nurses to participate in professional development activities, once they achieve their seven hours of CE, nurses don't have to take any more pain management courses for licensing purposes."

The timeframe surrounding the CE requirement is a bit confusing. Nurses have two years *before or after* the effective date of 1-2-06 to meet the CE requirement. Meaning, nurses could start accumulating their seven hours of pain management CE as of 1-1-04. Another element of the requirement is that anyone renewing their nursing license in the two years after the effective date has two years *from the date of their renewal* to obtain the required seven hours of CE. (*See illustration below.*) "Conceivably, someone who renews in August 2007 would have until August 2009 to obtain the required continuing education," says Bouchard. "So, nurses can start now and get it done before the requirement kicks in, or wait until their next renewal cycle and do it then."

So far, the Commission has established curriculum guidelines for physicians and surgeons and has directed other health professional licensing boards to adopt or modify those guidelines to meet the needs of their own licensees. The Oregon State Board of Nursing is continuing to examine possibilities for pain management CE, but has approved some guidelines for nurses wanting to start accumulating CE hours now.

"Currently, the Board of Nursing will accept CE coursework that is indicated as being approved or accredited for Continuing Nursing Education (CNE) or Continuing Medical Education (CME)," Bouchard says. A variety of accrediting bodies offer CNE or CME courses, including the Accreditation Council on Continuing Medical Education, professional nursing organizations, state boards of nursing, professional specialty organizations such as the Oncology Nursing Society, and universities and hospitals.

The OSBN has approved topical guidelines for the pain management curriculum.

The coursework must include such topics as general pain management and the treatment of terminally ill and dying patients. Coursework also could include specialty topics such as intractable pain and its diagnosis, pharmacotherapeutics, opioids and non-opioid analgesia, palliative care, end-of-life care, non-pharmacologic interventions (such as guided imagery), and pain management related to special populations (such as pediatric, geriatric or obstetric patients). Other specialty topics could include the psychosocial treatments and consequences of pain, prescribing practices and regulations, communication related to pain, and legal and ethical issues.

This type of continuing education will satisfy six out of the seven hours required. The Pain Management Commission will unveil its own course in December 2004 that will fulfill the remaining hour of required CE.

These CE topic guidelines are posted on the OSBN website (click on Current Topics or Licensing) along with links to possible CE sources on the internet. Watch the OSBN website for more CE details as they become available. To track licensees' pain management CE, the OSBN will integrate an attestation feature into its paper and online renewal processes by spring 2005.

