



“ Lighting the way with better patient care.”

Anova
HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Home Health · Hospice · Palliative · Home Care

HOSPICE PATIENT AND FAMILY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

TIPS FOR RECOGNIZING PAIN

In Patients with an Inability to Communicate Verbally

Patients may not be able to speak or describe their pain in the late stages of dementia, if they have had a stroke or in the late stages of other diseases such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS, Lou Gehrig’s disease). However, just because they cannot speak does not mean they are not experiencing pain.

Family members may be the first person to notice little changes in patient’s mood or behaviour that may mean the patient has pain.

- Always ask the patient if there is pain or if the patient is hurting anywhere. Patients who are non-verbal or have dementia may still have the ability to answer questions by nodding or with eye movements.
- Ask family members and other caregivers if they have noticed any changes in behaviour that might indicate the patient is having pain.

Patients may display any of the following behaviours:

- Facial expressions such as grimacing, frowning, looking sad, wrinkling of the brow.
- Movements such as restlessness, fidgeting, moving slowly, protecting a body part, pacing, rocking back and forth.
- Noisy, labored breathing.
- Looking scared, worried, or troubled.
- Acting tense.
- Wringing of hands or clenching fists
- Pulling at or touching a body part or area.
- Increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation.
- Any change in the patient’s usual behaviour – for example: a very talkative patient may become quiet or a very quiet patient may become very talkative.
- Moaning or groaning.

Report any of the above behaviours to the interdisciplinary team!