

Book Review

Pain Management in Nursing Practice. Edited by Shelagh Wright. IASP and Sage, 2014. Price: \$120 (US). 318 pp.

Pain is an experience most of us will have at some point in our lives – sometimes short lived – sometimes chronic – sometimes well managed – sometimes neglected – sometimes believed – sometimes discounted. It can be a signal that something is wrong – or – a disease in of itself. The meaning of the pain can be varied too – from pain associated with childbirth to pain associated with progression of a terminal disease. Pain is a multidimensional experience, physical, psychological, social and spiritual, and how it is understood and managed can impact both the quality of our lives and the quality of our deaths. Just as pain is a multidimensional experience so it requires a multimodal approach. The underpinning is good communication and a basic level of trust between the patient and healthcare practitioners. The premise is that the one experiencing the pain is the expert on their own pain experience, and that the healthcare professionals are the experts in sorting out the etiology(s) of the pain. Because the pain experience is individual, unique, and multidimensional, it is a challenging area for nurses and other healthcare professionals as they care for patients in pain. Yet nurses are key to pain management and assessment, they spend the most time of any profession at the bedside and are in the unique position of being able to observe the effectiveness of pain management strategies as well as the impact of poorly relieved pain on their patients and families. Having the tools to fulfill their obligations to patient and families around pain management is a necessary component of their nursing education.

Shelagh Wright has provided an up-to-date synthesis of pain theories and models and their application to modern day, patient-centered pain management in nursing practice. *Pain Management in Nursing Practice* is aimed primarily at meeting the learning needs of undergraduate nurses and should be helpful as a basic foundation for more advanced postgraduate courses in pain management in nursing. It incorporates the official nursing curriculum for the International Association for the Study of pain (IASP), a major undertaking and an important step forward for nurses around the world. This is a scholarly yet practical book. The 14 chapters comprising the text start with a historical overview of contributions from leaders in the fields of philosophy, medicine, and nursing to our current understanding of

pain and the transition from a linear view of pain to a complex systems perspective. Social, emotional, and psychological factors are recognized as being an integral part of pain processing. The importance of a multidisciplinary approach to pain, the principle of anticipating and preventing rather than alleviating pain, and the concept of total pain at end-of-life are all identified as important contributions to the field from some of these early pioneers. True to the philosophy of the IASP, the text ends with an excellent chapter on pain and human rights.

The book is ambitious – logically and concisely structured – each chapter starting with learning objectives and ending with bulleted key points, a reflective exercise, recommended reading, websites relevant to the chapter and references. Case scenarios are included throughout to help readers apply the knowledge they have learned to their own practice. The chapters present an overview of each topic and enough information to give the nurse a basic framework for understanding what is being discussed. The recommended readings and references provide the means for a more in-depth exploration and discovery if desired. Following the historical overview of pain, the chapters move through the biopsychosocial model of pain; neuro-psycho-physiology of pain; epidemiology of chronic pain; assessment and management of pain; communication in pain management; pharmacologic and interventional pain management; acute pain; chronic non-malignant pain; cancer pain; pain management in palliative care and at end of life; stress management and non-pharmacologic interventions for pain; quality, safety, and organizational issues in pain management; and finally, as previously noted, pain and human rights.

It is very rewarding to see the first written format of the official IASP nursing curriculum presented in this book form. It is a credit to the nurses from many different countries involved in developing the curriculum and to Shelagh Wright in bringing the book to fruition. The task was an important and I am sure a difficult one. A few suggestions for future editions (a) the neuro-psycho-physiology of pain (Chapter 3) is a difficult topic at best and perhaps could be presented in future editions in a less complex manner for the purpose of the book and intended audience – not an easy task. (b) The chapter on communication (Chapter 6) was somewhat disappointing focusing more on general principles of communication rather than communication specific to pain to which only two pages out of 16 pages were devoted. General principles of communication are of course foundational to all communication but the focus on pain became lost. (c) As previously noted,

because the pain experience is individual, unique, and multidimensional, it is a challenging area for nurses to work in. Perhaps add a section on the impact of pain on nurses caring for patients with difficult to control pain and providing self care techniques. And finally, (d) Pain is a family experience, so perhaps an additional chapter devoted to the family would be helpful.

I am glad to add this book to my pain library.

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