

Approaches to Pain: Shared Decision-Making Guide for Pain Management

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This guide was developed to help patients and providers discuss pain relief options. In this shared decision-making (SDM) approach, patients and providers use the treatment tiers (on opposite page) to develop a pain management plan.

“SDM in pain management increases knowledge, accuracy of risk perception and satisfaction while minimizing inequalities, decisional conflict, provider cost, litigations and complaints.”¹

Discussion Topic	Provider	Patient	Shared Discussion Outcome
Tiers of Pain - Patients can experience different levels of pain for same/similar conditions	Take the time to listen closely to your patient’s description of their pain. Ask clarifying questions to make sure you understand their experience and concerns.	Be open and honest about your pain, and any limitations or concerns that you may have.	A shared understanding of the patient’s pain to help guide a pain management plan.
Patient is not seeing pain relief with current medication(s)	Ask how and when the patient takes their medication(s). Address any adjustments to dosage or frequency that may be needed.	Keep a written record of your medication use. Write down the time, medication(s) and dosages each time you take them.	Ensure that the right medications are being taken at the right time and as prescribed.
Checking Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs)	Check the PDMP to ensure that all medications are accounted for and that there aren’t any contraindications for the medication(s) you might prescribe.	Help your provider clarify any findings in the PDMP. Checking the PDMP may prevent an adverse medication event that could cause you harm.	Ensure patient safety by verifying the complete list of patient medications and help prevent adverse medication events.
Deciding whether or not to use opioids, especially when chronic or ongoing pain is present	Along with a current physical examination, provide and review patient’s health and medication history. Assess risks that could lead to patient harms.	Ask about ways to manage pain with non-opioid medications and approaches. Be aware that taking opioids is risky and withdrawal can be very uncomfortable.	Recognize non-opioid pain management is preferred. Although opioids can be taken safely, it must be done with great care.
When an opioid prescription is determined to be the best option for the patient	Discuss the risks of opioids (i.e., constipation, falls, opioid dependence, etc.) and adhere to your state/specialty prescribing guidelines.	Take opioids <u>only</u> as prescribed. Keep the medication in a secure location to prevent unintended use by others and overdoses. Properly dispose of any leftover opioids.	Awareness of the benefits and risks of using an opioid medication.
Medication Agreement – When opioids are prescribed	Offer the patient a medication agreement when there is concern about safety due to either history or current circumstances. (i.e., if a patient is on their third month with an opioid medication).	This agreement is used to ensure your safety and monitor needed medication changes or begin treatment for opioid use disorder. Signing it is intended to help keep you safe.	When recommended, understand how to effectively participate in a medication agreement.

¹ Matthias MS, Talib TL, Huffman MA. Managing Chronic Pain in an Opioid Crisis: What Is the Role of Shared Decision-Making? *Health Commun.* 2020 Sep;35(10):1239-1247.

Shared Decision-Making Three-Tiered Alternative Approaches to Managing Pain

Each tier represents treatment options for patients and providers to discuss together for pain relief.



* Consult BEERS criteria for geriatric patients.