

## Pain Management

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Pain management is a national health care topic. Millions of Americans suffer from poorly controlled pain despite advances in scientific knowledge and technology. Health care systems are underperforming on pain satisfaction scores which impact reimbursement. The misuse and abuse of opioid analgesics is a national epidemic. It is imperative to re-evaluate pain management practices as a health care system to ensure safe, quality care is available across the care continuum. Advanced practice nurses are well positioned to lead this change.

While the majority of nurse practitioners provide direct patient care in a clinical setting, there is a growing opportunity for advanced practice nurses to lead organizational change through sharing of clinical expertise, coaching, research, applying evidence-based practice, and interdisciplinary collaboration. In October, 2015, Peggy Lutz, MSN, FNP-BC, RN-BC, Ministry Health Care, took her 20 years of clinical pain management experience at the bedside to a new role leading the system pain initiative as the Service Line Director for Pain Management.

Peggy's experience as an inpatient pain consultant for patients with complex pain needs created a vast foundation of clinical expertise and the leadership skills needed to impact change across a health care system.

The pain initiative focuses on delivering evidence-based, person-centered pain management across the care continuum. In her role as Service Line Director, Peggy is responsible for:

- Providing leadership and evidence-based, best practice recommendations to site and system leaders in addressing pain management problems, planning and implementing new services, and improving patient outcomes.

- Establishing interprofessional relationships at the local, regional, and system level to execute strategic plans leading to improved pain management throughout the system.
- Promoting alignment of pain management imperatives with service and quality priorities

Peggy acknowledges one of the greatest skills she took from clinical practice is a deep understanding of the needs of patients, families, and the entire patient care team. "I've been in the trenches. I've seen the challenges patients have with access to affordable care. I understand the time constraints nurses face while providing expert, compassionate care. I've seen the struggle to meet quality and financial metrics in a value based reimbursement system. These experiences are vital to helping me drive change at a system level."

Leading a system quality improvement initiative is an exciting opportunity to expand an advanced practice nurse's circle of influence.

"While working in a hospital-based role, I occasionally had the opportunity to work on a system project as a subject matter expert. Now, I can impact patient outcomes on a much larger scale through policy standardization, identifying and sharing of best practices, interprofessional collaboration and education, and aligning the pain initiative with existing resources and services such as Palliative Medicine, Behavioral Health, Quality Management, and Education and Development."

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Through interdisciplinary collaboration, Peggy has led the system pain priorities of the past year to include:

- implementation of standardized pain assessment scales in the inpatient nursing care units,
- implementation of a system-wide pain management policy,
- development of a cross-continuum, interdisciplinary Pain Steering Committee,
- collaboration with outpatient providers to implement opioid prescribing guidelines in the clinic setting,
- working with nursing leadership to develop an interdisciplinary pain resource network for inpatient care,
- increasing capacity of frontline associates by offering a pain certification review course and web-based study group to prepare for the pain certification exam,
- standardization of controlled substance patient agreements and policies, and
- review of prescribing practices for analgesics to provide guidelines for safe, evidence-based, regulatory compliant analgesic orders.

Beyond her role within Ministry Health Care, the pain initiative has created growing opportunities for Peggy to partner with resources within Ascension Health. Her involvement with Ascension Care Excellence committees creates alignment of local initiatives with our national health care partners.

“My advice to any nurse practitioner is to get involved, whether it’s local or national committees, professional organizations, or leadership development courses. The networking possibilities are invaluable and the rewards are plentiful. Being involved and recognized by my peers and leaders for my contributions has kept my perspective fresh and drives me to accomplish more.”

“One of the reasons I pursued an advanced practice nursing degree was to someday take my pain management experience beyond the hospital setting to a system level position. While I love taking care of patients and families, I also want to be an educator and mentor to help others develop the skills and acquire the tools and resources they need to provide the best pain care possible. I have exceeded my own aspirations by working not only at a system level for Ministry Health Care but also working closely with pain experts throughout Ascension Health.”