



# The International Association for the Study of Pain®

## Call for Action “Pain in Older Persons”

- The proportion of the world’s population over 65 years old is increasing. Pain is a frequent and debilitating problem in older persons, which is too often under-treated. Pain in older persons can be treated if the therapeutic plan is adapted to their specific needs. This requires expertise in pain medicine combined with advanced knowledge of older persons medical and psychosocial characteristics.
- The agenda for improving pain management in older persons must be assumed jointly by educators of practitioners-in-training, health care professionals, funding organizations, policy makers and public health organizations.
- Knowledge, attitudes and skills training about pain evaluation and management in older persons should be integrated into curricula of all levels of health care professionals training.
- Research on pain management strategies for older persons should be made a priority by funding organizations. Efforts should be made to include older persons in clinical trials of pain management strategies, including non-pharmacological, pharmacological and complementary/alternative medicine, so that clinical management can be based on more rigorous scientific evidence. Future research must also focus on age differences in pain and its physical and psychosocial impacts if we are to tailor treatment approaches to this population.
- Special attention should be given to improve primary care practitioners’ knowledge on assessment and management of pain in older persons.
- Access to physical and psychological modalities of pain management, to multidisciplinary pain clinics and to specialized pain management care must be improved for older persons with persistent pain.
- Older persons with cognitive or communication impairment, as well as those residing in residential aged care facilities and at the end-of-life, are at increased risk of under-report and under-treatment of pain. Special attention is required for these groups, with improved clinical assessment of pain, better access to multidisciplinary care and increased research on pain assessment and management strategies.
- Older persons, carers and treating health professionals should be reminded that pain is not part of normal aging and can be treated. Older persons should be educated on methods to self-manage their pain.
- Older persons in less developed countries are at increased risk of unnecessary suffering. International efforts should be made to improve training and resources for their pain management.
- Only with cooperation of patients and their caregivers, health care professionals, funding organizations, policy makers and public health organizations, will alleviation of the suffering of millions of older persons worldwide be possible.