



IASP

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
FOR THE STUDY OF PAIN

IASP Revises Its Definition of Pain for the First Time Since 1979

The International Association for the Study of Pain has revised the definition of pain, a standard that has been respected globally since it was first written in 1979.

“The revised definition was a true collaborative effort, written by a multi-national, multidisciplinary task force that received input from numerous stakeholders, including persons in pain and their caregivers,” said Srinivasa N. Raja, MD, Chair of the IASP Task Force and Director of Pain Research, Professor of Anesthesiology & Critical Care Medicine, Professor of Neurology, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

The new definition states that pain is:

“An unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with, or resembling that associated with, actual or potential tissue damage,” and is expanded upon by the addition of six key Notes and the etymology of the word pain for further valuable context:

- Pain is always a personal experience that is influenced to varying degrees by biological, psychological, and social factors
- Pain and nociception are different phenomena. Pain cannot be inferred solely from activity in sensory neurons.
- Through their life experiences, individuals learn the concept of pain.
- A person’s report of an experience as pain should be respected.
- Although pain usually serves an adaptive role, it may have adverse effects on function and social and psychological well-being.
- Verbal description is only one of several behaviors to express pain; inability to communicate does not negate the possibility that a human or a nonhuman animal experiences pain.

The etymology was also included in the revised definition: Middle English, from Anglo-French *peine* (pain, suffering), from Latin *poena* (penalty, punishment), in turn from Greek *poinē* (payment, penalty, recompense).

The revised definition was published in July in the association’s official journal, *PAIN*, along with the associated commentary by President Lars Arendt-Nielsen and Immediate Past President, Judith Turner.

“IASP and the Task Force that wrote the revised definition and notes did so to better convey the nuances and the complexity of pain and hoped that it would lead to improved assessment and management of those with pain,” said Dr. Raja.

“Pain is not merely a sensation, or limited to signals that travel through the nervous system as a result of tissue damage,” he said. “With a better understanding of an individual’s pain experience, we may be able to, through an interdisciplinary approach, add a variety of therapies to personalize their treatment of pain,” he added.



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Revised Definitions of Pain Translations (2020)

English to French

Définition révisée de Douleur (2020)

Une expérience sensorielle et émotionnelle désagréable associée ou ressemblant à celle associée à une lésion tissulaire réelle ou potentielle.

English to Russian

Пересмотренное определение боли (2020 г.)

Боль – неприятное сенсорное и эмоциональное переживание, связанное с истинным или потенциальным повреждением ткани или описываемое в терминах такого повреждения.»

English to Thai

นิยามที่ปรับแก้ของความเจ็บปวด (ค.ศ. 2020)

ประสบการณ์ทางความรู้สึกและอารมณ์ที่ไม่พึงประสงค์ ซึ่งมีอยู่ด้วยกันกับ หรือคล้ายว่ามีอยู่ด้วยกันกับความเสียหายทางเนื้อเยื่อที่มีอยู่ หรือที่อาจมีอยู่

English to Arabic

مألل حققنم لافيرع ل (2020)

فلتب ، ةطبترم لاكلت هبشت وأ ، ةطبترم ةراس ري غ ةيفي طاعو ةيسي ح ةب رجت
حجس نألل لم حم وأ رل عف

English to Simplified Chinese

經修訂的疼痛定義 (2020)

疼痛是一种伴随实际或潜在的组织损伤，或任何与此类类似的损伤和应急所致的不愉快的感觉和情绪情感体验。

Chinese Association for the Study of Pain (CASP)

English to Spanish (European)

Revisión de la definición de «dolor» (2020)

Experiencia sensorial y emocional desagradable asociada o semejante a un o posible daño tisular.

English to Spanish (Latin Variant)

Definición revisada de dolor (2020)

Una vivencia sensitiva y emocional desagradable asociada, o semejante a ésta, con una lesión tisular real o potencial.

English to Japanese

痛みの定義 (2020)

日本語訳 (日本疼痛学会 2020.7.25)

「実際の組織損傷もしくは組織損傷が起こりうる状態に付随する、

あるいはそれに似た、感覚かつ情動の不快な体験」

Japanese Association for the Study of Pain (JASP)

English to German

Überarbeitete Definition von Schmerz (2020) Ein unangenehmes Sinnes- und Gefühlerlebnis, das mit einer tatsächlichen oder potentiellen Gewebeschädigung einhergeht oder einer solchen ähnelt.

Deutsche Schmerzgesellschaft e.V - German Pain Society

These translations were created by a professional translation firm, with additional comments from some IASP Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and Chapters, but may need modifications over time. Should you have any comments or questions, please email IASPDesk@iasp-pain.org.