

Fast Facts on Pain Management

FAST FACTS #3 WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION STEP LADDER

CASE STUDY:

Gloria has compression fracture of T 12 for which she has been taking Tylenol without adequate pain relief? You have done an assessment that found Gloria's pain is described as a constant ache that increases with ambulation and movement, moderate in severity (5 to 6/10). She is more aware of the pain at night so that it interferes with sleep. Because it hurts more with walking she is spending more time lying down and watching TV to distract her which seems to help a little.

What is the next step in treating Gloria's pain?

Main Teaching Points:

Utilize the pain ladder. Gloria is receiving a step one analgesia for mild pain. The pain is now moderate to severe with descriptors of bone pain.

Changes Made:

- ◆ Step 2 was chosen because the pain was moderate to severe.
- ◆ Analgesic selection: Oxycodone started in addition to acetaminophen and given in combination form (oxycodone 5mg + acetaminophen 325 mg (Percocet)). To take 1 or 2 tablets PO, every 4 hours.
- ◆ Potential side effects: Constipation, sedation nausea

KEEP IT SIMPLE: THE WHO "ANALGESIC LADDER"

- ✓ **STEP 1** - patients with mild to moderate pain should be treated with nonopioid analgesic, which should be combined with adjuvant drugs if indication for one exists.
- ✓ **STEP 2** - patients who have limited opioid exposure and present with moderate to severe pain or who fail to achieve adequate relief after a trial of a nonopioid analgesic should be treated with an opioid conventionally used for moderate pain.
- ✓ **STEP 3** - patients who present with severe pain or who fail to achieve adequate relief following appropriate administration of drugs on the second step of the analgesic ladder should receive an opioid conventionally used for severe pain.

