

## *Pain assessment in adult patients with dementia in the hospital setting*

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### **Abstract**

#### **Problem statement and background**

Pain has been identified as the fifth vital sign. Therefore, it is important for nursing practice to address. Patients with dementia are not always able to express their pain using the numeric pain rating scale that is traditionally used for assessing adults. Some patients are not able to verbally express their pain at all. This may result in over- or under-medication. Various pain assessment methods are used in nursing homes for patients with dementia. However, there seems to be a lack of research evaluating the use of pain assessment tools for dementia patients in the hospital. Various factors that may impact the use of an instrument in the hospital setting are ease of use and the time to complete the assessment. Nurses often have limited time with patients in the hospital setting because of a high patient to nurse ratio and high acuity rates. Therefore the pain assessment tool should be thorough yet succinct to be an efficient use of time.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to compare and contrast three pain assessment tools to identify the best pain measure for patients with dementia in the hospital setting.

#### **Recommendations for practice**

According to the literature, the PAINAD or Abbey scale could be equally appropriate for assessing pain in patients with dementia in the hospital setting. We recommend that the Abbey pain scale be implemented in practice due to its more thorough assessment and inclusion of physiological and physical changes, which can easily be incorporated into an RN's routine assessment of the patient.