

Defining pain: a concept analysis



Pain has been defined variously by numerous writers leaving readers with no universally accepted definition. The extent of pain also varies from patient to patient, an extent of which can only be known from the patients description. Several types of pain have been examined by academics and medical practitioners. The pain could be physical or economical. In this paper we shall focus on pain. The various definitions of pain that have been given will briefly be outlined. The response of the nurses' community to pain will also be examined as will be the attributes of the pain.

The various remedies of handling pain in patients will be examined including the gains and shortcomings of the same. Pain is a major health problem in most parts of the world today. It is therefore major area of concern for the nursing fraternity and for everyone else in general. The study of pain is important since the knowledge would be used to know how patients to attend to these patients suffering from this pain should be handled. The causes of pain when known would assist the medical experts in determining how the cases can be eliminated.

The knowledge of the causes would help in adopting preventive measures where possible. The close friends and relatives of the patients with pain would be advised on how to attend to these patients (Man et al, 2007). The project being undertaken seeks to identify the number of patients who report to health care centers with pain conditions. This should help in putting into figures the actual number or at least an estimated number of people who report pain. When we learn the extent of the pain among the population, the courses of action and the speed of the actions would be highlighted.

The major attributes of people suffering from pain would be known from the project. This would help the medical practitioners to know the defining characteristics of the condition to avoid confusing with other medical complications. The project also is targeted at gathering all the definitions that have been outlined with a view of gaining a commonly acceptable definition. The study of pain is important to the nursing practice. Since pain traverses physical and emotional aspects, it is important that nurses provide the needed support, both physically and emotionally.

The importance of study of pain is further underscored by the fact that nurses are the ones who come into contact with these patients. They therefore should be equipped with necessary skills to enable them offer working solutions to the patients. Numerous studies have been carried out on pain, its causes, its development, effects and remedies. The studies have contributed to increased knowledge in this discipline. Pain has been defined as an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage or described in terms for such change. (Chapman, 1993).

In this definition the author lays emphasis that pain is not only a physical pain matter, but also that pain affects a person's emotional life. The cause at the pain according to this definition is damaged tissue. This brings in the physical aspect of the pain, the damage could also be in progress meaning that pain is not only caused by totally damaged tissue, but also organs and tissues that are progressively getting damaged. Stuart Derbyshire, a psychologist says that pain is subjective. " Pain is something that comes

from our experiences and develops due to stimulation and human interaction.

It involves concepts such as location, feelings of unpleasantness and having the sensation of pain. Pain becomes possible because of a psychological development that begins at birth when the baby is separated from the protected atmosphere of the womb and is stimulated into wakeful activity. " Fetus, according to the psychologist, cannot feel pain because pain is a product of the mind and as such the fetus cannot feel it since their minds are not developed.

The study had also been carried out among three women with pain and how the pain led then to making some decisions. The pain in one woman caused so much suffering that she had to have a hip replacement. Another woman had incessant pain at the knee and an operation had to be carried out. The other woman was having tendonitis which was consistent causing pain over time. In a bid to cope with the pain, each of the women had to change their careers midway in life. They had to pick up careers that could enable them cope with the pain. The much emotional pain that resulted from pain was studied.

One woman lost a relationship when she constantly complained of pain. The pain interfered with her ability to engage in some activities and this led to their parting ways (Sinner, 2004). In this study the author wanted to establish if there existed a causal relation between the decision to further learning and pain in women. The results indicated that pain, no matter its cause, led women into making decisions to further their studies. The pain

experienced by women often causes them to peruse college or university courses in a bid to lessen the sufferings.

The study defined pain as multidimensional experience characterized by a distinct form of pain because the persistence of the continuous pain over time is accompanied by responses. Pain embodies elements of physical effects and psycho-spiritual effects upon a person (Sinner 2004). Another study was conducted on self-organization in pain. The study examined the attributes and consequences of self organization. The study reviewed the fluctuations and instabilities that are caused by pain on individuals. Pain causes many uncertainties in a person's life and the person is unable to tolerate the fluctuations.

These fluctuations cause the person to enter into an adjustment period whose length may vary. The individual is forced to do a self examination to pick the important things in life. The persons are forced to choose where to channel their energies. They have to learn to appreciate what they have. When these persons adjust to the pain they experience at different levels, they have been found to change their value systems and they take a different world view (Monsavias, 2005). The findings of the study were classified into three main categories.

The first category was of the patient's experience of a time to chaos and confusion. The second category was the patient's findings difficulty telling others that their pain was real. The third category involved a loss of feelings for one's prior identity. The three categories define the developments that occur from when a person recognizes they have pain. In the first step anxiety, depression and anger characterize the patient as they come to

terms with the pain. The second stage involves the relations to others when they are told of the pain.

This study indicated that other people were sometimes less concerned about how the pain affects a person. The third stage in dealing with the pain is a loss of identity. This is characterized by ceasing to be what one used to do especially career change (Monsivais, 2005) In this study the first step towards healing when a person is experiencing pain constituted in the health care providers belief on the pain. Family and friends also determined how well patients dealt with the condition. The second attribute was the assessment of resources.

These involved finding specialists in the pain conditions. The availability of such specialists eased the burden on patients by offering solutions and providing knowledge to them. The third attribute assessed was action and responsibility for one's own health care. This involved self management by the patient including when to withdraw from normal routines when to ask for help and using comforting activities to make one's self feel better (Monsivais, 2005). A case that shows what pain is has been drawn from imagination.

Consider a person who walks into a hospital explains to the nurse of pain in the arm. The nurse runs tests on the patient but does not see any anomaly. Though facial expression indicates, but the arm looks okay. The patient would be annoyed if the nurse does not believe. This would add emotional pain because it would be difficult to convince the family of the pain. If finally the problem is diagnosed and the arm is amputated, so many things would

change in that person's life she would not continue in a career that required much hands operation and they may become dependent.

Another study was conducted whose objective was to estimate the prevalence and to examine the characteristics of severe pain in chemically dependent populations receiving method one maintenance or inpatient residential treatment (Rosenblum & others, 2003). Chronic severe pain was in this study defined as the pain that had persisted for more than six months and was of moderate to severe intensity or one that interfered with daily activities of a person. Two large samples were taken 390 patients from methadone maintenance treatment programs and others from short – term residential substance abuse treatment.

The sample was drawn from patients in New York. The findings of the study indicated that chronic severe pain among patients in substance abuse treatment was prevalence especially among those in methadone maintenance treatment programs. This means that pain is increased or made severe if the patient has a history of substance abuse. An interesting finding of the study indicated that the intensity of chronic severe pain varied with population. The patients with a European descent experienced much less pain than those of the Hispanics or Blacks.

Pain is characterized by continuity. The pain has to be experienced for some time though the duration is not universally agreed. Thus pain is not excruciating pain experienced all of a sudden. The pain has to be gradual; starting with slight pain which may disappear for some few days then comes back and continues over time usually six months or more. Pain is also not limited to physical pain. It has to have emotional effects on the individual.

The person has to feel some sense of seclusion from the society since there lacks people who would believe them.

Some signs of anger and depression usually can be noted in the patients. Pain in general is not only a physical aspect but it also involves emotions. In some cases, pain may be caused by malfunctioning of some tissues causing the person to change what they were used to doing (Chisholm, 2003). In conclusion pain has been found to be a major area of concern not only for the medics but also for the general public. There is need for all people to be involved in understanding what comprises the condition.

This will assist the ones who suffer from pain to be better understood by others and thus get better treatment from us. The medical fraternity will also be empowered in the handling of these cases. The attributes of pain will assist in better diagnosis of the condition so that chances of wrong diagnosis are minimized. It is also important that the emotional sufferings the patients undergo be outlined so that they can be assisted. Further studies need to be carried out to increase the amount of information already available.

The previous studies have shown much disparity since they have all used different methodologies. This has made comparison of one study with others hard. The researchers in this field should agree on a universally acceptable methodology that would allow more in-depth analysis and comparison. People are also called upon to view differently those with pain since this is not an anomaly. They therefore need to be treated as individuals first and then individuals with chronic condition.