

# IOWA PAIN MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:** Your contact name  
Name of your organization  
Phone number of contact  
e-mail of contact

## **You Don't Have to Live in Pain** *September is National Pain Awareness Month*

September 1, 2006 (Your city, Iowa) -- Persistent pain is significantly under-treated and incredibly misunderstood — by many health care professionals, most of the decision makers in Washington, DC, and even by those closest to you — your family members and friends. In 2000, Congress declared 2000-2010 the Decade of Pain Control and Research to make pain a national health priority. Through this declaration, leading pain organizations who pushed for this declaration, including the American Academy of Pain Medicine, the American Headache Society, and the American Pain Society, hoped that public attention and funding for research would be focused on this serious public health issue that affects 75 million Americans.

Name of your organization is part of the Iowa Pain Management Initiative. Our purpose is to educate all Iowans about pain management and to encourage all those in pain to talk to their doctors about it.

### Is Your Loved One in Pain? Eight Ways to Tell When They Can't Tell You Themselves

Many people provide care for family members and other loved ones either at home or in nursing facilities. Sometimes these loved ones are unable to speak for themselves—they may have had a stroke, dementia, Parkinson's disease, or be developmentally disabled. They might also be an infant or very young child. For family caregivers in such situations, it can be difficult to know if the person they care for is in pain.

When it is not possible to ask about pain, it is possible to observe behaviors that can give a clue as to whether someone is suffering. A caregiver should observe behaviors during activity whenever possible, as pain may be minimal or absent when the person is at rest. The behaviors to be observed include the following:

1. Facial expression. Is the person grimacing or wincing? Does he have a furrowed brow, narrowed eyes, tightened lips, clenched teeth, distorted expression? (In infants, facial expressions include eyebrows lowered and drawn together to form a vertical furrow, a bulge between the brows with the eyes tightly closed, cheeks raised with a furrow between the nose and upper lip, and the mouth open and stretched in the shape of a square.)
2. Vocal complaints. Is the person moaning, groaning, grunting, crying, gasping, or sighing?
3. Bracing. Is the person clutching or holding onto the bed or affected area when she moves?
4. Restlessness. Is the person constantly or intermittently shifting position, rocking, making intermittent or constant hand motions, unable to keep still? (Remember that sleep does not equate to the absence of pain. Persons in great pain can become so exhausted by it that they may eventually sleep even though the pain continues.)
5. Rubbing. Is the person massaging the affected area?
6. Verbal complaints. Does the person curse during movement or make exclamations of protest such as “stop” or “that’s enough”?
7. Breathing. Is the person’s breathing labored or noisy?

8. Consolability. Is it difficult to distract or reassure the person?

All of these are possible indications that a person is in pain, although they might not always accurately reflect the intensity of the pain. In some cases, these behaviors might indicate another source of distress, such as emotional or spiritual suffering. In any case, a person who is exhibiting these behaviors should be seen by a physician to determine and treat the underlying causes of the pain or suffering.

In some situations, pain may be assumed to occur—such as when a medical procedure is being done—and appropriate medication should be requested from the health care providers involved prior to beginning the procedure. Infants do experience pain. The part of the brain and nervous system that allows you to feel pain is fully developed at birth, although it may not be fully functional in premature infants. In one review of medical charts of 180 children between 6 months and 10 years of age, researchers found that 65% of children younger than 2 went without pain medication. Some speculate that this is due to very young children not being able to tell caregivers about their pain. It is important that babies and young children receive appropriate pain relief for any type of painful procedure, such as circumcision.

When we are caring for an individual who cannot speak for himself, it is important that we advocate for him in the health care system. Part of this advocacy is learning to know the signs of pain and to work with health care providers to see that medications and treatments are begun that will either eliminate the pain or keep it to a minimum.

***Add comments from local pain management experts here***

Additional resources on pain management can be found at:

***Add local resources here***

The National Pain Foundation

[www.nationalpainfoundation.org](http://www.nationalpainfoundation.org)

The Mayo Clinic

[www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)

The American Chronic Pain Association

[www.theacpa.org](http://www.theacpa.org)

The American Academy of Pain Management

[www.aapainmanage.org](http://www.aapainmanage.org)

###