



## *Information for You from Your Health Care Team*

### **Acute Pain Management Procedures**

The acute pain management service takes care of the inpatients with post surgical pain, cancer pain, sickle cell pain and basically all types of pain for which the service is consulted.

#### **Placement of epidural catheters**

Epidural catheters are very thin plastic catheters which are placed in the epidural space in the back of the spine. These can be used to infuse pain medications which will act on the spinal cord and brain more effectively than IV medications. Epidural catheters will also help the postoperative patients to breathe better and prevent postoperative pulmonary complications especially in chest operations.

Usually catheters are placed by anesthesiologists before the surgery under local anesthesia. In experienced hands it is a safe procedure. The complications include back pain at the site of insertion, accidental spinal tap and spinal headache, nerve irritation, and very rarely hematoma and infection.

#### **Patient controlled analgesia**

This is another way of pain control in which the patient controls the administration of the pain medication through the IV line by pressing a button attached to the machine. There is a lockout interval programmed to the machine and that prevents the patient from overmedicating.

#### **Nerve Blocks**

Nerve blocks including intercostal nerve block that is done for pain relief for rib fractures and pain following shingles are done by the acute pain team. These nerve blocks also supplement postoperative pain management.

Experienced pain management physicians and nurse practitioners manage the oral and IV pain medication for the patients who are admitted to hospital. There is one resident physician with a pain fellow as backup on call 24hours.

## **Acute Pain Management Procedures** *Continued*

### **Placement of axillary and interscalene catheters**

Placement of axillary and interscalene catheters are done to alleviate certain pain that occurs in frost bite, trauma or vascular problems.

### **Cancer pain management**

Cancer pain management is another important area of acute pain management. Cancer patients are managed for their pain by oral medications, IV patient controlled analgesics, intrathecal narcotic pumps or ports and transcutaneous medications.