Six-step identification and assessment procedure for all residents who can communicate successfully

1. Give the resident the time and opportunity on a regular basis to speak about their concerns, including pain. Ask all residents about pain while they're at rest as well as moving. Use words like "sore", "hurting", "aching", as well as "pain".

2. Be watchful for signs of pain (called "pain behaviours") when the resident is resting and also while moving.

3. If the resident reports pain, explain the need for further assessment, involve the family if appropriate, and proceed to Step 4. If the resident does not report pain or show any pain behaviours, there is no further action needed at this time.

4. Use the Modified Residents' Verbal Brief Pain Inventory (M-RVBPI)*. This is a "multidimensional scale", meaning that we can get an overall understanding and documentation of the severity, location and effects of the pain.

5. For residents with pain, monitor progress and response to treatment using a pain severity (or "intensity") scale. There are different types of these "unidimensional" scales that use numbers, words or pictures. These include a Numeric Rating Scale** (NRS) and a Verbal Descriptor Scale*** (VDS).

6. Use this information to begin your facility's procedure for multidisciplinary pain assessment and management. Make sure it is communicated between care worker, nurse, doctor, pharmacist, allied health practitioner, the resident and their family.

Two kinds of pain behaviours

Basically, we can think of pain behaviours as two kinds:

"Protective" – trying to prevent or reduce pain, for example:

- Limping, holding, rubbing
- Trying to stop you from touching or moving a part of the body (called "guarding")
- Being unwilling to move or undertake an activity such as rolling over

"Communicative" – giving information about pain

- Facial expression
- Vocal sound such as "Ouch" or "Groan"

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* Appendix 1: Modified Residents' Verbal Brief Pain Inventory (M-RVBPI).

** Appendix 2: Numeric Rating Scale (NRS)

***Appendix 3: Verbal Descriptor Scale (VDS)