In the Tradition of The Sisters of The Little Company of Mary with values of Hospitality, Healing, Stewardship and Respect

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- Acute Pain Service
- Consultant Anaesthetists
- CHCT Anaesthetic Sub-Committee

PATIENT CONTROLLED ANALGESIA (PCA) FOR PAIN MANAGEMENT

Patient Information

Calvary Health Care Tasmania
GPO Box 1523
Hobart TAS 7001

Telephone: (03) 6278 5170
Facsimile: (03) 6278 5163
Email: TAS-Nursing@calvarycare.org.au
Website: www.calvarycare.org.au

Version 1 - November 2013
INTRODUCTION

PCA stands for Patient Controlled Analgesia. This is a locked computerised device attached to the IV pole on the bed that allows you to administer your own regulated amount of pain management drug whenever it is needed.

HOW THE PCA WORKS

You will be provided with a handset which has a button. When you press the button the pain relieving drug is delivered directly into your vein via an intravenous drip.

It is important that only you press the button or in some cases the nursing staff may assist you when required. Under no circumstances should relatives or others press the button for you.

While the PCA is in use, the nursing staff will regularly check pulse, breathing, blood pressure and the PCA device. You will be asked to rate your pain on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being no pain and 10 being the worst pain ever experienced.

PAIN RELIEF AFTER SURGERY

Untreated pain can cause complications and slow your recovery time. With effective pain relief after surgery patients are able to recover more quickly. You will feel more comfortable, your appetite improves and you are able to get up and move around.

ADVANTAGES OF PCA

- Fast pain relief
- No injections or waiting for pain relief required as the drugs enter the vein immediately through your drip

WHEN TO USE THE PCA

The PCA is usually commenced in the Recovery Room after surgery. The dose will be calculated by the Anaesthetist and programmed into the machine to maintain good pain relief with pre-set safety limits. When awake, you will be advised by the nursing staff how to use the PCA for pain management.

You should not wait for the pain to become severe before pressing the button. Once the button has been pressed it may take a few minutes before the pain is relieved. If the pain is not relieved, press it again.

You cannot overdose as the machine has a lock-out period during which time the machine will not allow further administration to occur. You should discuss any ongoing unrelieved pain or difficulty in pressing the button with the nursing staff.

SIDE EFFECTS

There are occasionally side effects with pain relief medication such as nausea, itching and over-sedation, but not everyone will experience these. Any side effects should be reported to nursing staff who can give medication to help relieve these.

PCA AND OTHER MEDICATION

As the PCA is generally only used for the first 24 to 48 hours after surgery, addiction to these pain relieving drugs is extremely unlikely.

Additional oral &/or rectal analgesic medication may be prescribed by the Anaesthetist or Surgeon. A combination of pain relieving drugs is often more effective and may reduce the need for the PCA and help alleviate any side effects.

STOPPING THE PCA

Everyone has different needs for pain management after surgery. As wound-pain decreases, the need to use the PCA decreases.

The decision to stop the PCA is made by the Anaesthetist or Surgeon after discussion with you and nursing staff.

When the PCA is stopped, other pain relieving medication will be prescribed to ensure continued pain management.

If there are further questions, please ask the Anaesthetist or nursing staff.