
Goals of treatment in managing visceral pain



Goals in the Management of Visceral Pain

Address underlying pathology



Alleviate symptoms



Treatment should not be delayed unless it would obscure the diagnostic workup

Goals in the Management of Visceral Pain

Address underlying pathology

← Parallel treatment →

Alleviate symptoms

- In **theory**, can defer pain management until symptom cause identified
 - Masking pain may confound diagnostic process and delay recognition of a potentially life-threatening condition
- In **practice**, a clear cause of each symptom may never be proven
- Symptomatic treatment should not be withheld when a treatable condition has been identified

Prolonged/repetitive visceral afferent barrage into CNS increases risk of long-term sensitization and consequences (e.g., referred hyperalgesia, trophic changes)

Overview of the Treatment of Visceral Pain

- Symptomatic treatment relies mainly on pharmacotherapy
 - Analgesics
 - Acetaminophen
 - NSAIDs/coxib
 - Opioids
 - Non-analgesic agents
 - Antidepressants
 - $\alpha_2\delta$ ligands
 - Nitrates for angina
 - Histamine receptor agonists or PPIs for ulcer/gastritis
 - Deep infiltration of muscle layer of referred area with local anesthetic may be helpful
- Non-pharmacological treatments are also important
 - Cognitive behavioral therapy
 - Meditation
 - Psychotherapy

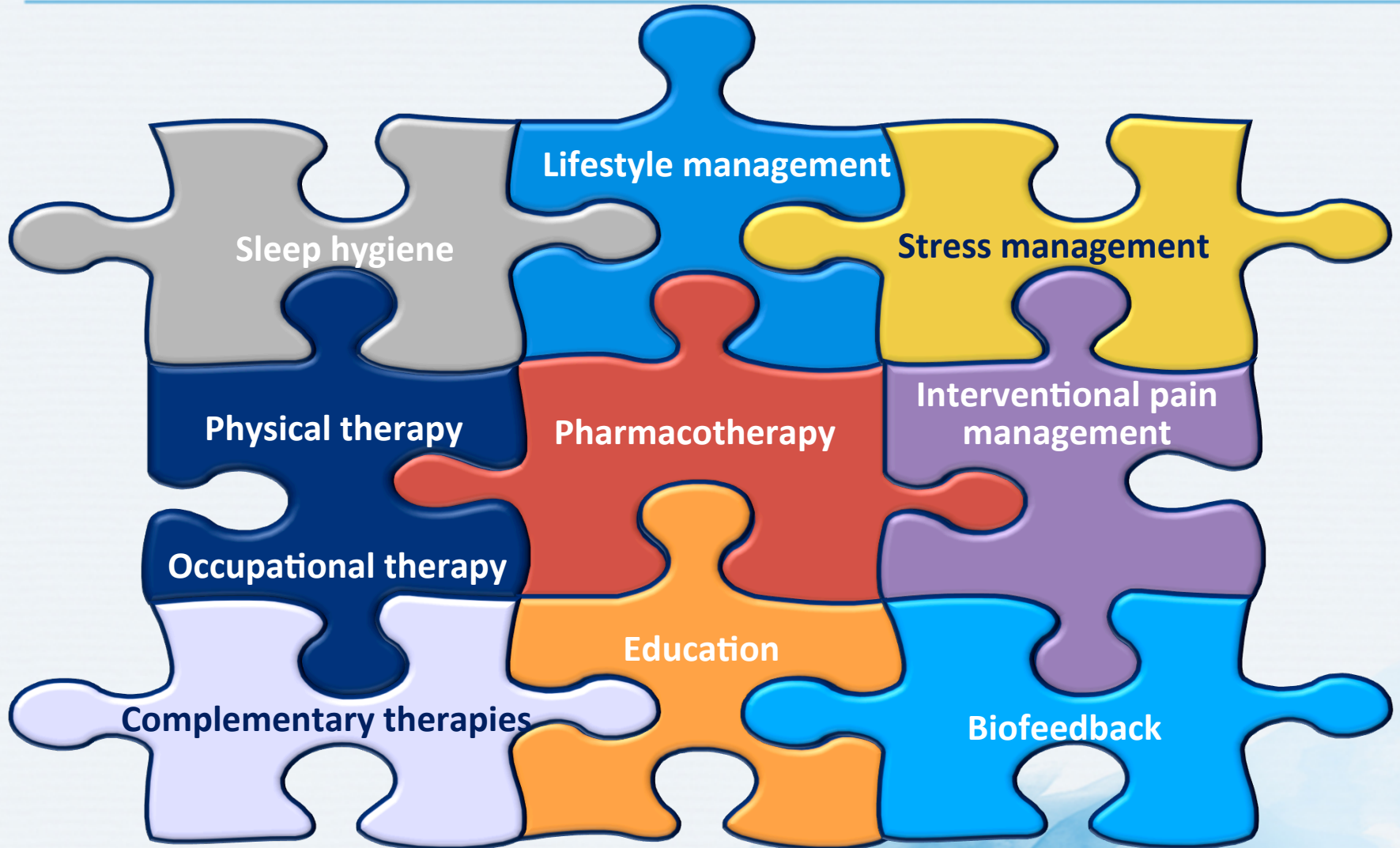
Non-pharmacological Management of Visceral Pain



Benefits of Non-pharmacological Methods in Treating Visceral Pain

- Increase individual's feeling of control
- Decrease the feeling of weakness
- Improve activity level and functional capacity
- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Reduce pain behavior and focused pain level
- Reduce needed dosage of analgesic drugs → decrease drug adverse effects

Multimodal Treatment of Pain Based on Biopsychosocial Approach



Various Non-pharmacological Treatments Are Available for Visceral Pain

Physiotherapy



Psychotherapy/CBT



Multimodal pain management programs

No modality is universally recommended

Alternative therapies and spiritual healing



Patient education



Pharmacological Management of Visceral Pain

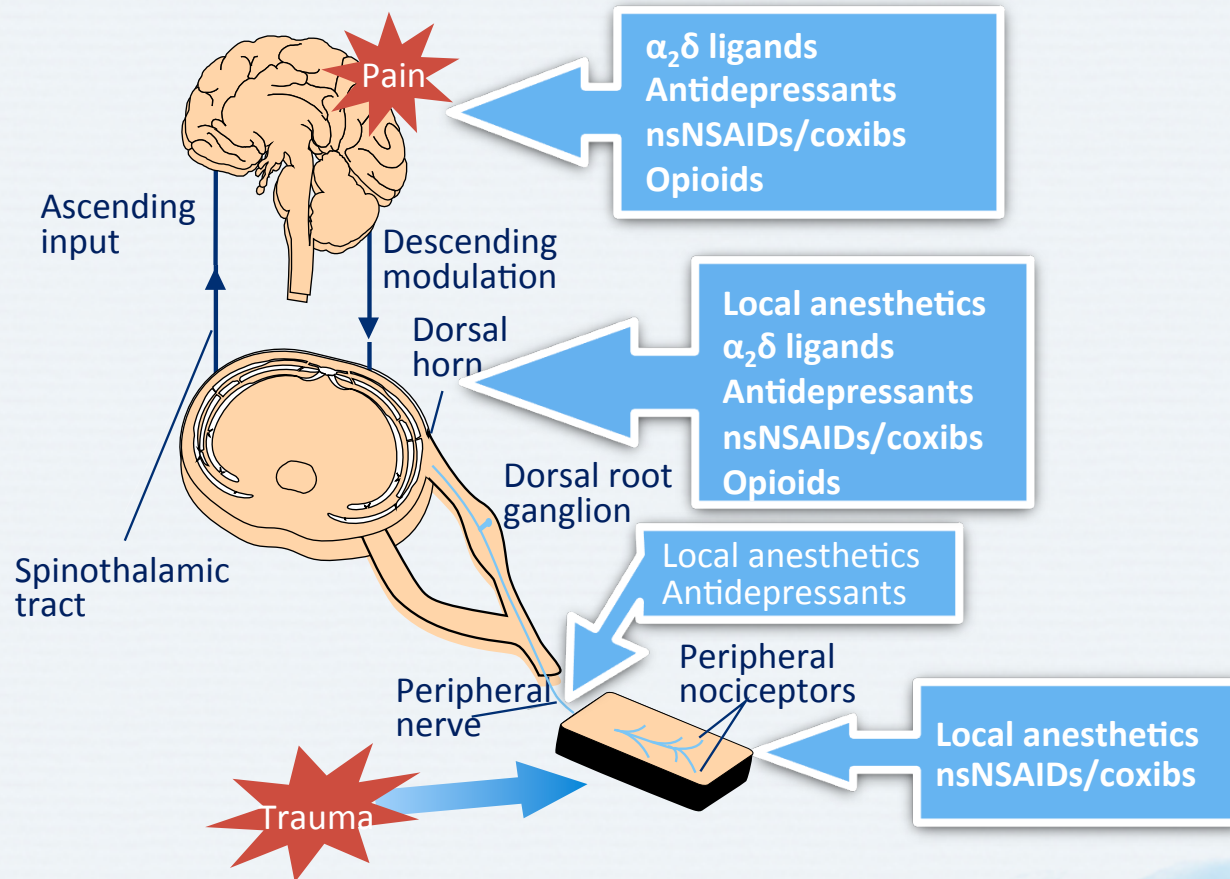


Overview of Pharmacological Management of Visceral Pain

- Visceral pain is included with somatic and nociceptive pain in most clinical trials
 - Difficult to select appropriate drug choices for visceral pain
- There may be differences in responses to analgesics
- Analgesic combinations likely to be more effective than single agents
- Analgesic dose-response relationships for visceral pain may be different than those for somatic pain

Unlikely that one analgesic or targeted agent will significantly reduce most visceral pain because multiple neurotransmitters, channels, and receptors are responsible

Analgesics Affect Different Parts of the Pain Pathway



Coxib = COX-2 inhibitor; nsNSAID = non-specific non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug

Adapted from: Gottschalk A *et al.* *Am Fam Physician* 2001; 63(10):1979-84; Verdu B *et al.* *Drugs* 2008; 68(18):2611-32.

Overview of Pharmacological Treatments for Visceral Pain

Drug(s)	Comments
Acetaminophen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak COX-2 inhibitor and selective COX-3 inhibitor • Little known about efficacy in managing visceral pain • More effective in combination with NSAIDs
NSAIDs/coxibs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Block COX-1 (NSAIDs) and COX-2 (NSAIDs, coxibs) • Alleviate pain but adverse events (especially GI) preclude chronic use • More effective in combination with acetaminophen
Opioids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modify perception, modulate transmission, and affect pain signal transduction • May cause hyperalgesia – dose reduction may improve pain control • Adverse events, risk of abuse, addiction, tolerance, and physical dependence limit use
Antidepressants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modulate interactions between CNS and enteric nervous system; ↓ visceral hypersensitivity • TCAs most studied – agents that modify serotonergic transmission may be useful • Help with anxiety and depression often experienced with visceral pain
$\alpha_2\delta$ Ligands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticonvulsants: gabapentin, pregabalin • Bind to $\alpha_2\delta$ subunit of voltage-dependent Ca^{2+} ion channels in CNS • May be helpful in managing visceral pain but little data supports use • All use in treating visceral pain is considered off-label

COX = cyclooxygenase; coxib = COX inhibitor; CNS = central nervous system; NSAID = non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug; TCA = tricyclic antidepressant
 Davis MP. *Pain Res Treat.* 2012;2012:265605; Patrizi F *et al. The Scientific World J.* 2006;6:472-90; Davis MP. *Pain Res Treat.* 2012;2012:265605; Gastrosource. Available at: <http://www.gastrosource.com/11674565?itemId=11674565>; Vane JR, Botting RM. *Inflamm Res.* 1995; 44(1):1-10; Clemett D, Goa KL. *Drugs.* 2000; 59(4):957-80; Grosser T *et al.* In: Brunton L *et al* (eds). Goodman and Gilman's The Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics. 12th ed. (online version). McGraw-Hill; New York, NY: 2010; Crowell MD *et al. Curr Opin Investig Drugs.* 2004;5(7): 736-42; Fioramonti J, Bueno L. *Gut.* 2002; 51(Suppl 1): i91-i95; Dalton CB, Drossman DA. Available at: <https://www.med.unc.edu/ibs/files/educational-gi-handouts/IBS%20and%20Antidepressants.pdf>; Attal N, Finnerup NB. *Pain Clinical Updates.* 2010; 18(9):1-8; Lacy BE *et al. Therap Adv Gastroenterol.* 2009;2(4):221-38.

Acetaminophen in the Management of Visceral Pain

- Weak COX-2 inhibitor and selective COX-3 inhibitor
 - Increases brainstem serotonin neurotransmission
 - Redirects beta-endorphin
 - Inhibits 5-HT 3 receptors, which are pronociceptive
- Although commonly used for pain, little is known about its efficacy in managing visceral pain
 - Most studies do not focus on visceral pain
- May be more efficacious in **combination** with NSAIDs
 - Systematic review: NSAID + acetaminophen combinations superior to acetaminophen alone in 85% of studies and to NSAIDs alone in 64% of studies

Acetaminophen is more effective in managing visceral pain when used in combination with NSAIDs

NSAIDs/coxibs in the Management of Visceral Pain

- Most-used analgesic drugs¹
- Effective but cause several side effects that preclude chronic use¹
- May fail to relieve chronic pain completely¹
- Act by inhibiting production of prostaglandins¹
- In renal or biliary colic, NSAIDs may involve acetylcholine blockade²
- May be more efficacious in **combination** with acetaminophen²
 - NSAID + acetaminophen combinations superior to acetaminophen alone in 85% of studies and to NSAIDs alone in 64% of studies
- NSAIDs superior to anticholinergics and opioids in relieving renal colic²

Because chronic visceral pain is not usually associated with injury and inflammation, NSAIDs/coxibs might not be suitable for this condition¹

COX-2 Is Involved in Central Sensitization

- Central induction of COX-2 increases prostaglandin production
- PGE2 stimulation of EP receptors in the dorsal horn will:
 - Activate PKC, phosphorylating and further enhancing NMDA channel opening
 - Directly activate certain dorsal horn neurons by opening EP2 receptor linked ion channels
 - Reduced inhibitory transmission of glycinergic inter-neurons
 - Increased depolarization and excitability of dorsal horn neurons

COX-2 Inhibition Minimizes Sensitization

- Signal for COX-2 induction likely to persist with peripheral inflammation
- To minimize sensitization, COX-2 should be inhibited centrally and in the periphery
 - As early as possible
 - Continued until peripheral inflammation resolved
- Ideal COX-2 inhibitor should be able to act in periphery as well as centrally
 - Should readily cross blood-brain barrier

Opioids in the Management of Visceral Pain

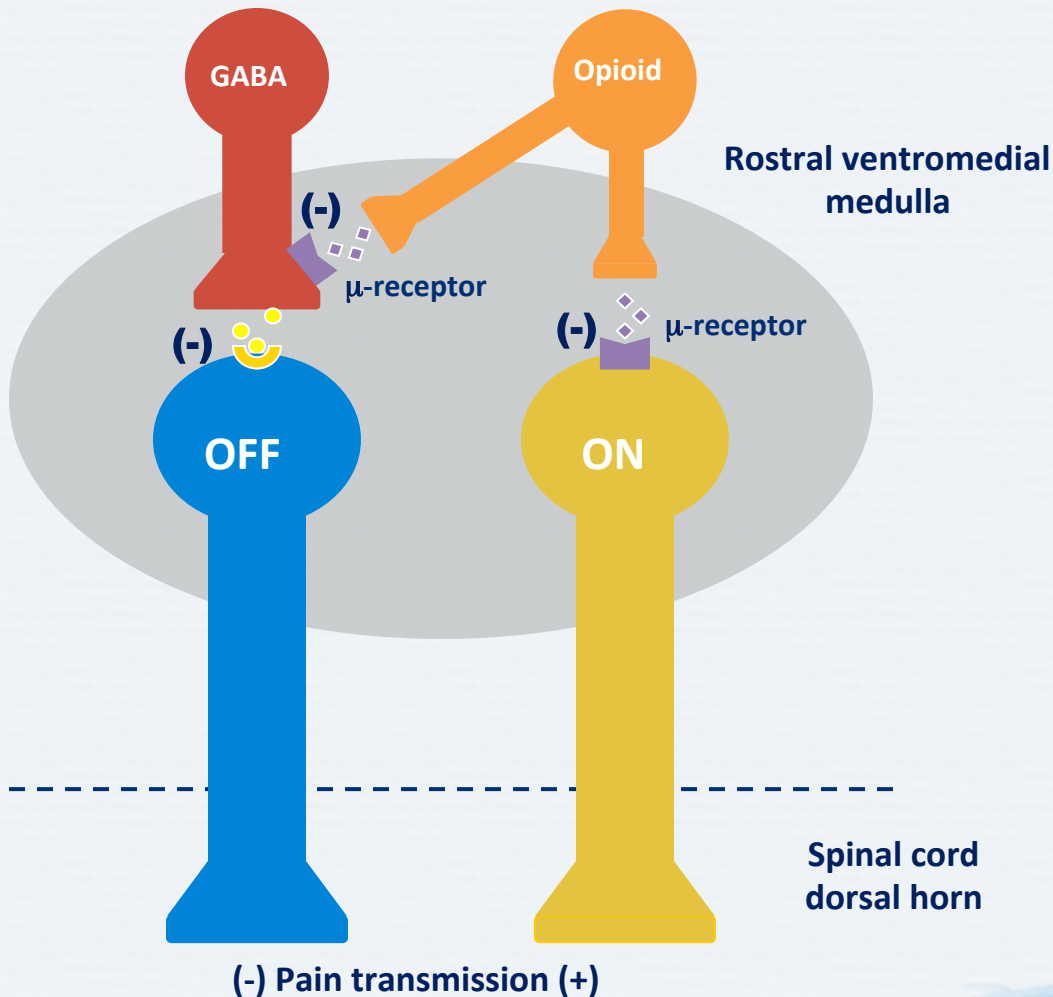
- May cause hyperalgesia
 - Increased pain intensity extent of pain area
 - Radiation with reduced responsiveness to opioids
 - Mimics pain associated with progression of underlying pathology
 - **Physicians who are unaware of this phenomenon may increase opioid dose, only to worsen the visceral pain**
- Addition of adjuvant analgesics or opioid rotation useful in managing opioid-induced hyperalgesia
- NSAID, acetaminophen, and opioid combinations may be additive or synergistic
- Antidepressants + opioids may reduce visceral pain due to inhibition of sodium channels, NMDA receptors, P2X channels, and prostaglandins

Paradoxically, opioid dose reduction may improve pain control

Opioids and Pain Management

Opioid Receptor	Response
Mu	Supraspinal analgesia, respiratory depression, sedation, miosis, euphoria, cardiovascular effects, pruritis, nausea/vomiting, decreased gastrointestinal motility, dependence, tolerance
Delta	Analgesia, euphoria, dysphoria, psychotomimetic effects
Kappa	Spinal analgesia, dysphoria, psychotomimetic effects, miosis, respiratory depression, sedation

Opioids Modulate Control of “ON” and “OFF” Cells



- **Opioid stimulation of mu-receptors on “ON” cells**
 - Reduced “ON” cell activity
 - Reduced facilitation of pain transmission at dorsal horn
 - **Less pain**
- **Opioid stimulation of mu-receptors on GABA-ergic interneurons innervating “OFF” cells**
 - Reduced GABA-ergic interneuron activity
 - Reduced inhibition of “OFF” cells
 - Increased “OFF” cell inhibition of pain transmission at dorsal horn
 - **Less pain**

GABA = γ -aminobutyric acid

Fields HL *et al.* In: McMahon SB, Koltzenburg M (eds). *Wall and Melzack's Textbook of Pain*. 5th ed. Elsevier; London, UK: 2006.

Opioids Can Induce Hyperalgesia

- Primary hyperalgesia
 - Sensitization of primary neurons → decrease threshold to noxious stimuli within site of injury
 - May include response to innocuous stimuli
 - Increase pain from suprathreshold stimuli
 - Spontaneous pain
- Secondary hyperalgesia
 - Sensitization of primary neurons in surrounding uninjured areas
 - May involve peripheral and central sensitization

Opioids Can Induce Allodynia

- Pain evoked by innocuous stimuli
- Central sensitization → pain produced by A β fibers
- Possibly mediated by spinal NMDA receptors

NMDA = N-methyl-D-aspartate

Dolan S, Nolan AM. *Neuroreport* 1999; 10(3):449-52; Raja SN *et al.* In: Wall PB, Melzack R (eds). *Textbook of Pain*. 4th ed. Churchill Livingstone; London, UK: 1999; Woolf CJ. *Drugs* 1994; 47(Suppl 5):1-9.

Adverse Effects of Opioids

System	Adverse effects
Gastrointestinal	Nausea, vomiting, constipation
CNS	Cognitive impairment, sedation, lightheadedness, dizziness
Respiratory	Respiratory depression
Cardiovascular	Orthostatic hypotension, fainting
Other	Urticaria, miosis, sweating, urinary retention

Additional Opioid Use Concerns

- Abuse and addictive potential
- Tolerance and physical dependence
- Administrative burden in distribution and monitoring due to scheduled status

CNS = central nervous system

Moreland LW, St Clair EW. *Rheum Dis Clin North Am* 1999; 25(1):153-91; Yaksh TL, Wallace MS. In: Brunton L *et al* (eds).

Goodman and Gilman's The Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics. 12th ed. (online version). McGraw-Hill; New York, NY: 2010; World Health Organization. *Understanding Health Professionals' Fear of Opioids*. Available at: <http://www.whocancerpain.wisc.edu/?q=node/332>. Accessed: October 17, 2013.

Additional Opioid Concerns

- Abuse and addictive potential
- Tolerance and physical dependence
- Administrative burden in distribution and monitoring due to scheduled status

Antidepressants in the Management of Visceral Pain

- Visceral pain syndromes may be effectively treated by a number of therapies that modulate interactions between the central and enteric nervous systems
- Antidepressants may be efficacious for treatment of these syndromes
- TCAs most studied
 - Other antidepressants may be useful because serotonin modifies sensation in the gut
- Agents that modify serotonergic transmission may be useful in the moderation of visceral pain syndromes
 - Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors may be useful

Antidepressants in the Management of Visceral Pain

- Antidepressants work at the level of brain and spinal cord to block pain messages between the gastrointestinal tract and the brain → reduces visceral hypersensitivity
- May help recover the brain's ability to respond to pain signals properly
- May stimulate nerve cell growth and possibly restore more normal nerve function in the in the brain and intestines over time
- Patients may require antidepressant treatment for 6 months to 1 year
 - Therapy may need to be extended in patients with a longer history of visceral pain

Using antidepressants can also help with the anxiety and depression often experienced by individuals with visceral pain

Antidepressants Used in the Management of Visceral Pain

Class and Drug	Adverse Effects	
TCA Amitriptyline Imipramine Desipramine Nortriptyline	Dry mouth Difficulty sleeping Difficulty urinating	Sexual difficulties Constipation Dizziness Drowsiness
SSRI Citalopram Escitalopram Paroxetine Sertraline Fluoxetine	Nervousness Vivid dreams	Sleep disturbances Sexual difficulties Diarrhea
SNRI Venlafaxine Duloxetine Desvenlafaxine Milnacipram	Nausea Headache	Changes in liver chemistry (rare)

Suggested Mechanisms of Analgesic Action of Antidepressants

Mechanism of Action	Site of Action	TCA	SNRI
Reuptake inhibition	Serotonin	+	+
	Noradrenaline	+	+
Receptor antagonism	α -adrenergic	+	-
	NMDA	+	(+) milincipran
Blocking or activation of ion channels	Sodium channel blocker	+	(+) venlafaxine/ - duloxetine
	Calcium channel blocker	+	?
	Potassium channel activator	+	?
Increasing receptor function	GABA _B receptor	+ amitriptyline/ desipramine	?
Opioid receptor binding/ opioid-mediated effect	Mu- and delta-opioid receptor	(+)	(+) venlafaxine
Decreasing inflammation	Decrease of PGE2 production decrease of TNF α production		

How Effective Are Antidepressants in the Management of Visceral Pain?

- Studies are rare and data are controversial
- Some studies have been conducted on healthy volunteers, which influences outcomes
 - Limited studies in patients suffering from visceral pain
 - In IBS patients, low dose amitriptyline (10 – 25 mg/day) for six weeks increased pressure thresholds needed to induce pain using rectal distension

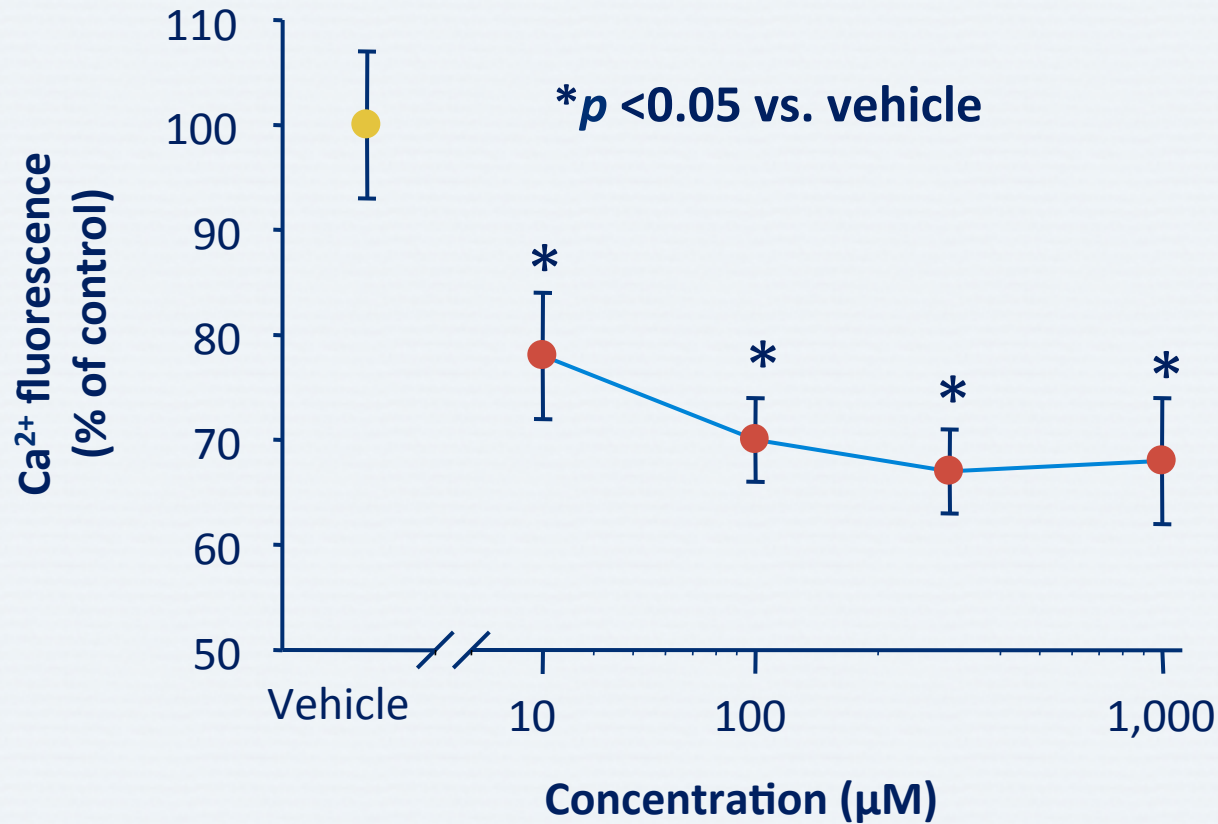
Some antidepressants increase pain threshold but have no effect on pain perception or discomfort

$\alpha_2\delta$ Ligands (Anticonvulsants) in the Management of Visceral Pain

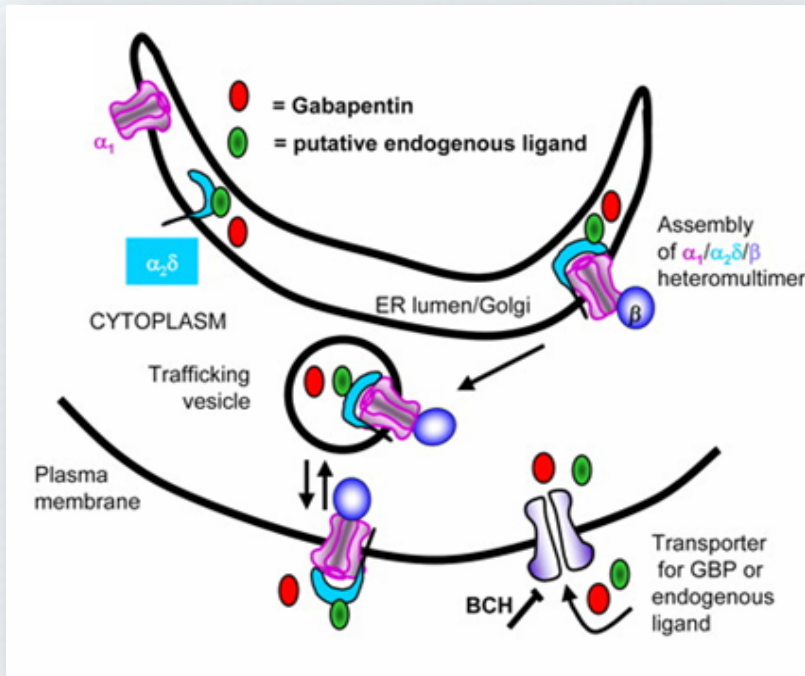
Gabapentin	Pregabalin
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Biochemically similar to GABA• MOA poorly understood• Binds to $\alpha_2\delta$ subunit of voltage-dependent calcium ion channel in CNS• May decrease Ca^{2+} influx into nerve terminal \rightarrow affect release of multiple neurotransmitters, including substance P• Generally well tolerated• Dizziness, somnolence, and peripheral edema common• May increase pain threshold in IBS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Successor to gabapentin• Binds to $\alpha_2\delta$ subunit of voltage-dependent calcium ion channel in CNS• Animal and human trials have demonstrated blunted visceral pain perception• One study in IBS patients showed an increase in sensory distension thresholds to normal levels and decreased pain

In theory, gabapentin and pregabalin may be helpful in the treatment of visceral pain. However, little data currently supports their use and all use is considered off-label.

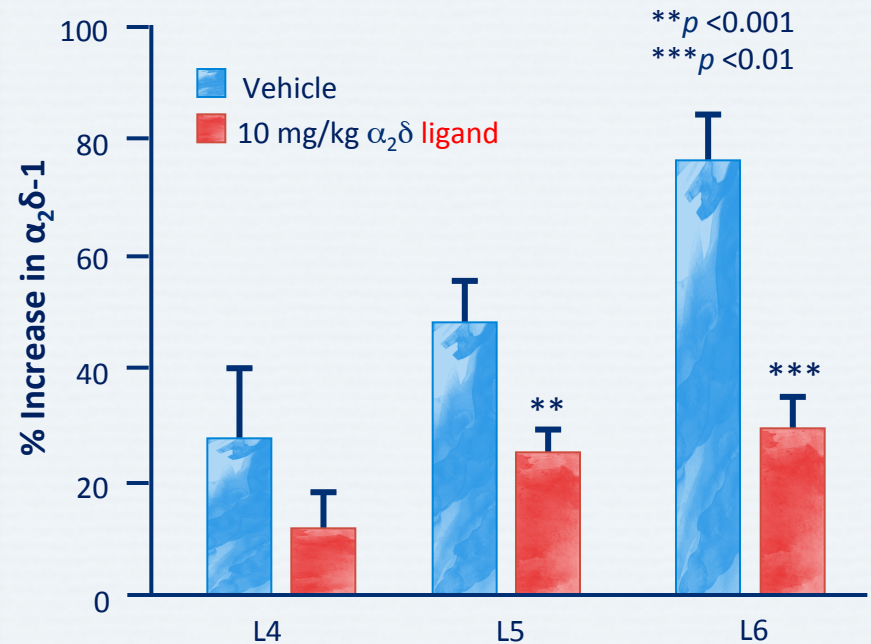
$\alpha_2\delta$ Ligands Reduce Calcium Influx in Depolarized Human Neocortex Synaptosomes



$\alpha_2\delta$ Ligands Modulate Calcium Channel Trafficking



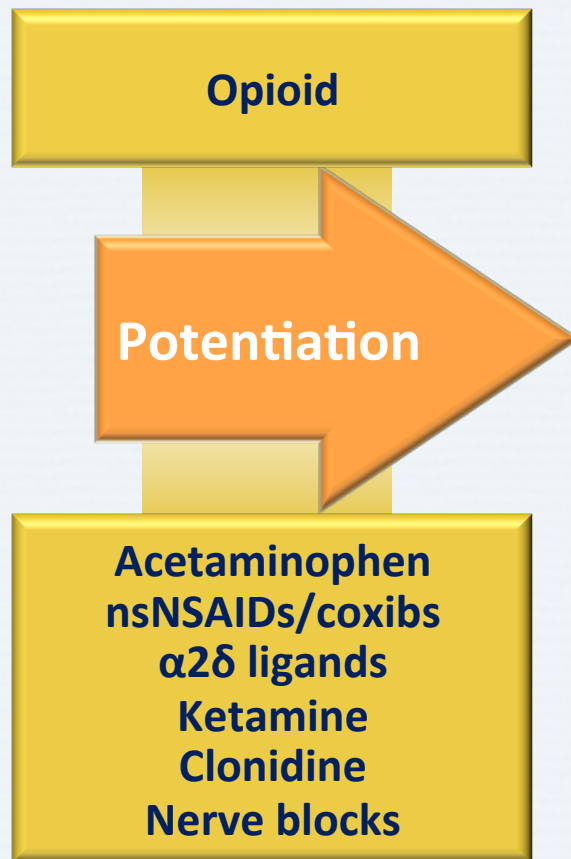
Hendrich et al. 2008



Bauer et al. 2009

- $\alpha_2\delta$ ligands reduce trafficking of voltage-gated calcium channel complexes to cell surface *in vitro*
- $\alpha_2\delta$ ligands prevent nerve-injury induced up-regulation of $\alpha_2\delta$ in the dorsal horn

Multimodal or Balanced Analgesia



- Improved analgesia
- ↓ doses of each analgesic
- ↓ severity of side effects of each drug

Synergistic or Additive Effects of Analgesics Used in Combination

- Agents with different MOAs can potentially have additive or synergistic effects:
 - Acetaminophen/NSAIDS + opioids
 - Opioids + local anesthetics
 - Centrally acting agents + NSAIDS
 - Opioids + $\alpha_2\delta$ ligands (e.g., dexmethatomidine)

MOA = mechanism of action; NSAID = non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug

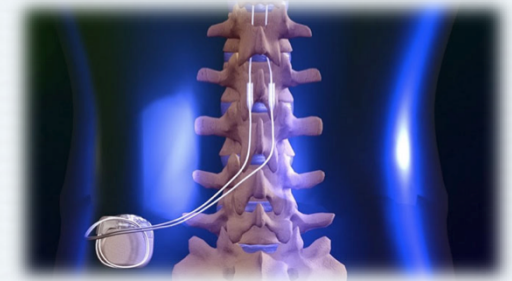
Bader P *et al.* *Guidelines on Pain Management*. European Association of Urology; Arnhem, The Netherlands: 2010;

Kehlet H *et al.* *Acta Anaesthesiol Scand* 2010; 55(7):778-84; Paul S *et al.* *Ceylon Med J* 2010; 55(4):111-5; Robert B *et al.* *J Pain* 2010; 11(8):701-9;

Starks I *et al.* *ISRN Anesthesiology* 2011; 2011:742927; Vadivelu N *et al.* *Yale J Biol Med* 2010; 83(1):11-25.

Spinal Cord Stimulation (SCS) and Visceral Pain

- Used for >40 years to control complex intractable pain syndromes
 - Especially neuropathic pain
- Precise mechanism of analgesia is unknown
- Recent study (2015) showed SCS significantly reduced pain in IBS
 - Trend in reducing number of attacks, diarrheas
- 2014 study reported sacral nerve stimulation can significantly reduce symptoms and improve QoL of patients with IBS
- SCS is a minimally invasive treatment option IBS pain
 - Can also be used for chronic pelvic pain

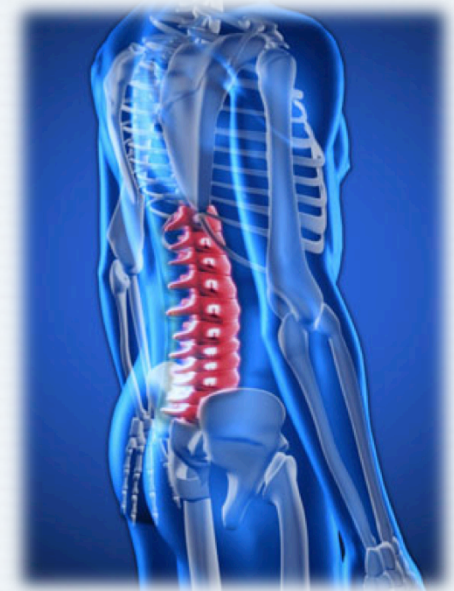


IBS = irritable bowel syndrome; QoL = quality of life

Hunter C *et al.* *Pain Pract.* 2013;13(1):3-17; Lind G *et al.* Therapeutic value of spinal cord stimulation in irritable bowel syndrome – a randomized cross-over pilot study. Available at: <http://ajpregu.physiology.org/content/early/2015/03/11/ajpregu.00022.2015>. Accessed March 25, 2015; Abdel-Aziz S, Ghaleb A. *Pain Studies Treatment.* 2014;2:86-90.

Neuromodulation and Visceral Pain

- Sacral nerve root stimulation effective in:
 - Interstitial cystitis
 - Painful bladder syndrome
 - Chronic prostatitis
 - Coccygodynia
 - Vulvodynia
 - Anorectal pain
 - Chronic pelvic pain
 - Bladder dysfunction, incontinence, urinary retention



Neuromodulation and Interstitial Cystitis (IC)

Percentage of patients with IC with $\geq 50\%$ improvement in symptoms with neuromodulation

	Moderately Improved	Markedly Improved	Total Positive Response
Urinary frequency	38%	33%	71%
Urinary urgency	38%	24%	62%
Pelvic pain	35%	30%	65%
Pelvic pressure	40%	40%	80%
Quality of life	34%	38%	72%
Incontinence	38%	31%	69%
Bowel movements	34%	5%	39%
Vaginal pain	31%	23%	54%

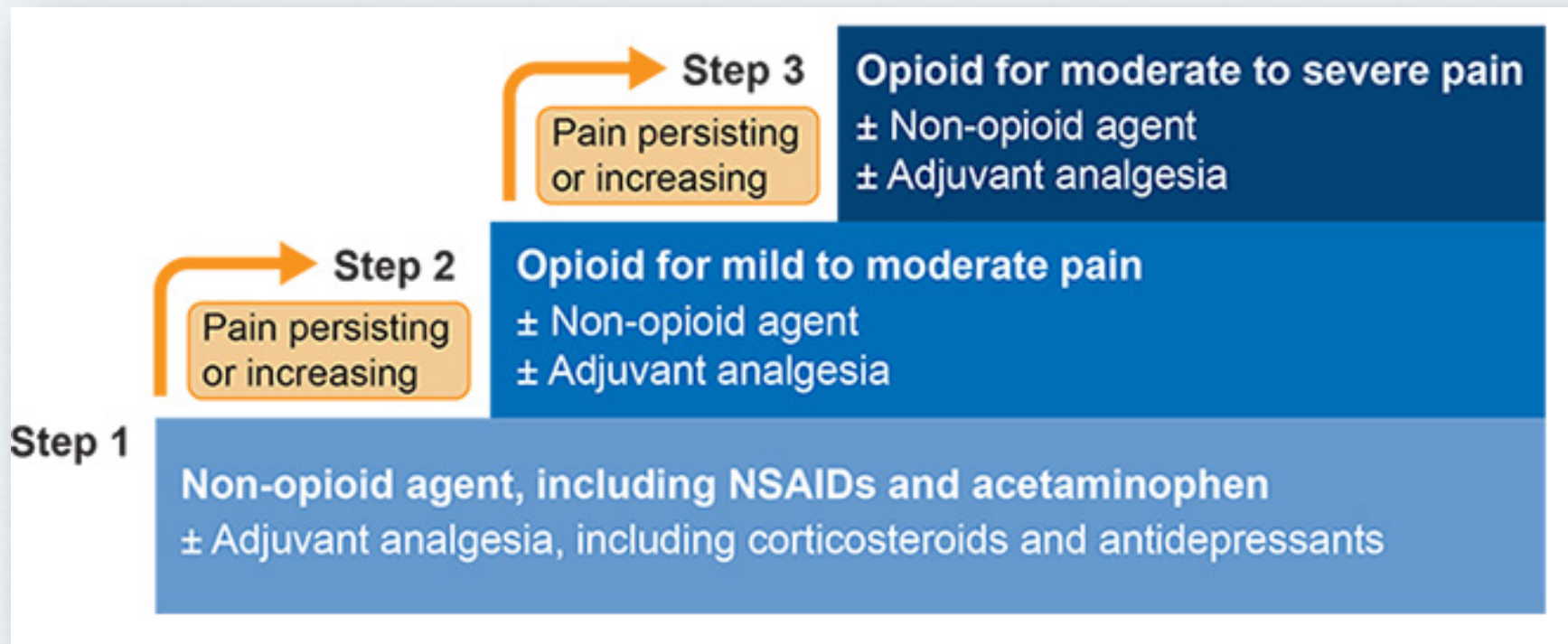
Treatment Recommendations for Visceral Pain



Guidelines for the Management of Visceral Pain

- No consensus treatment recommendations or guidelines exist for the general management of visceral pain
- WHO analgesic ladder can be used as a guideline in managing pain
 - WHO approach may need to be combined with other treatment modalities

World Health Organization Analgesic Ladder



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