



## PAIN ASSESSMENTS

# Are clinicians required to ask patients about pain during every consultation?

### DEBUNKING REGULATORY MYTHS

AMA's regulatory myths series provides administrative leaders and physicians with resources to reduce guesswork and administrative burdens so their focus can be on improving patient outcomes, streamlining clinical workflow processes, and increasing physician satisfaction.

### THE MYTH

Clinical teams are required to ask patients about their level of pain at every visit, regardless of the reason for the visit.

### DEBUNKING THE MYTH

In their 2001 original pain standards, the Joint Commission had a requirement that each patient receive a pain assessment. This requirement was eliminated in 2009 from all programs except Behavioral Health Care Accreditation. The current version of the standard for hospitals and programs other than behavioral health states that, "The hospital assesses and manages the patient's pain." This standard allows organizations to set their own policies regarding which patients should have pain assessed based on the population served and the services delivered. Joint Commission surveyors determine whether such policies have been established, and whether there is evidence that the organization's own policies are followed.

For more information on these misconceptions, read the full [Joint Commission Statement on Pain Management](#), including the [New and Revised Pain Assessment and Management Standards from the Joint Commission](#), which became effective January 1, 2019.

The AMA is not aware of any federal or state regulations that recommend or require inquiries about pain at every visit, although we recommend you contact your state medical association to determine whether there are nuances in state law or regulation that may be relevant.

### Resources

2019: [New and Revised Pain Assessment and Management Standards from the Joint Commission](#)

2017: [The Joint Commission's pain standards: Origins and Evolution](#)

2016: [The Joint Commission Statement on Pain Management](#)

AMA STEPS Forward™ [Essentials of Good Pain Care](#) practice improvement module