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# Systematic Literature Review: Assessment of Pain

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**Background:** Pain control is a priority in palliative care. Intensity is one of the major elements in pain assessment, and should be evaluated through scales, which enhance its objectivity. The knowledge and adequate use of the existing instruments for pain evaluation is essential.

**Aim:** Identification of valid and reliable pain assessment instruments.

**Methods:** A systematic literature review was undertaken, on Pubmed® database. Papers published on the period between 2000 and 2015, written in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese were included.

**Results:** 3217 articles were identified, after exclusion and inclusion criteria and abstract review, 103 papers were selected for full text analysis. 16 different pain assessment instruments were identified and characterized. Heterogeneity

in pain assessment scales was found, and these could be broadly divided in: one-dimensional instruments, multi-dimensional and quality of life scales.

**Discussion:** An absence of consensus regarding pain evaluation scales was identified. The lack of standardization of assessment tools renders the comparison of efficacy and effectiveness of pain controlling interventions particularly difficult. However, it was possible to make an extensive survey of pain assessment scales, identifying the psychometric characteristics of each of the identified scales, country, and type of study, context, target population and number of citations.

This study confirms the need for standardization of pain assessment scales, by the health services, in compliance with the World Health Organization recommendations for Palliative Care.