

PAIN DIMENSIONS

Pain is one of the most complex phenomena to study in the field of health care because of its strong subjective component and multidimensional aspect (Melzack et al., 2008; Turk et al., 2011).

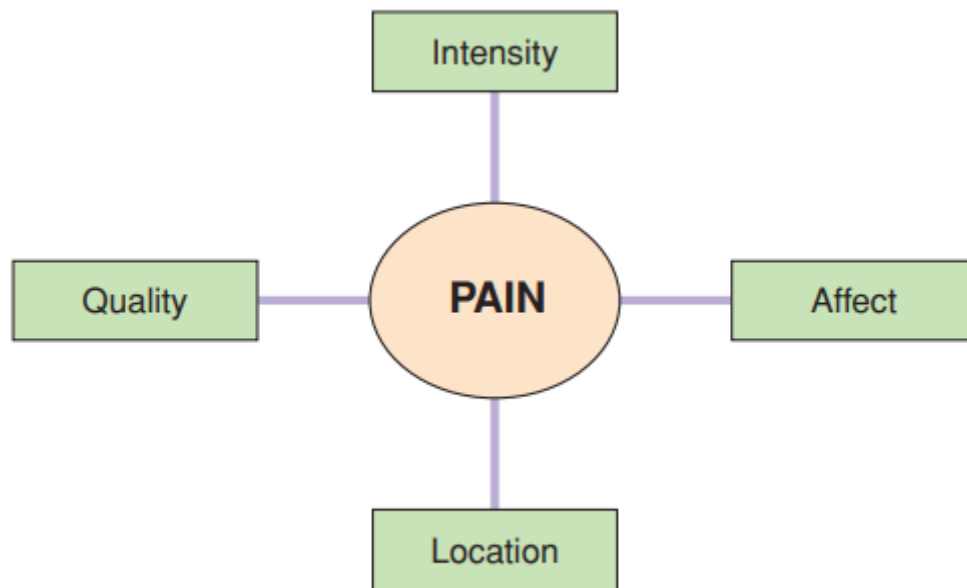


FIGURE 4-3 Dimensions of pain.

➤ Intensity

The first dimension of pain relates to its intensity or evaluative aspect. Pain intensity may be defined as how much a person hurts (Jensen et al., 2011). Intensity is the dimension of pain most frequently assessed by clinicians. There is a linear trend between the level of pain intensity, treatment delivery, and discharge. In most cases, the more intense the pain, the more aggressive the treatment delivery and the less rapid the discharge. Inversely, the lesser the pain is, the less aggressive the treatment and the more rapid the patient's discharge.

➤ Quality

The second dimension of pain concerns its quality or sensory aspect. It refers to the specific physiologic sensations associated with pain. It reveals how the person feels or senses the pain (e.g., burning, itching). This dimension is very informative in determining the cause or nature of pain.

➤ **Affect**

The affective dimension of pain is very complex because it relates to the degree of emotional arousal—that is, the changes in action readiness caused by the sensory experience of pain (Jensen et al., 2011). Pain affect is a mental state triggered by an implicit or explicit appraisal of threat. In chronic pain, the emotional aspects can come to dominate the clinical picture (Jensen et al., 2011). This pain dimension is very important to clinicians and helps them determine the extent to which the patient is emotionally affected by his or her pain condition. This information can help to make a better choice of pain therapy.

➤ **Location**

Pain location is defined as the perceived location(s) of pain sensation that patients experience on or in their bodies. Assessing pain location is important because the numbers of locations and sites indicated by the patients may be related to physical and psychological functioning (Jensen et al., 2011)