

## The EAPC Algorithm for Evaluating Episodic (Breakthrough) Cancer Pain

Overview: The Working Group of the European Association for Palliative Care (EAPC) used an algorithm to help identify the different types of breakthrough pain that can occur in a patient with terminal cancer. The type and intensity of pain being experienced can help direct palliative interventions.

Steps in episodic (breakthrough) pain evaluation:

(1) Is there significant baseline pain indicating inadequate pain management?

- If so: Use the WHO pain ladder of increasing analgesic pain medication to provide adequate pain management then reassess.

(2) Are there factors that can alleviate or reduce pain?

- If so educate and train the patient in ways to minimize pain.

Type of Pain	Description	Movement Related?
neuropathic	lancing shooting burning	can be
visceral	colicky	can be
bone/periosteal pain	pain in bones associated with movement	yes
soft tissue pain	pain with contact	can be

References:

Mercadante S Radbruch L et al. Episodic (breakthrough) pain. Consensus Conference of an Expert Working Group of the European Association for Palliative Care. *Cancer*. 2002; 94: 832-839 (Figure 1 page 833).