PASERO OPIOID-INDUCED SEDATION SCALE (POSS)*

S = Sleep, easy to arouse
Acceptable; no action necessary; may increase opioid dose if needed

1 = Awake and alert
Acceptable; no action necessary; may increase opioid dose if needed

2 = Slightly drowsy, easily aroused
Acceptable; no action necessary; may increase opioid dose if needed

3 = Frequently drowsy, arousable, drifts off to sleep during conversation
Unacceptable; monitor respiratory status and sedation level closely until sedation level is stable at less than 3 and respiratory status is satisfactory; decrease opioid dose 25% to 50%[1] or notify primary[2] or anesthesia provider for orders; consider administering a non-sedating, opioid-sparing nonopioid, such as acetaminophen or a NSAID, if not contraindicated; ask patient to take deep breaths every 15-30 minutes.

4 = Somnolent, minimal or no response to verbal and physical stimulation
Unacceptable; stop opioid; consider administering naloxone[3,4]; stay with patient, stimulate, and support respiration as indicated by patient status; call Rapid Response Team (Code Blue) if indicated; notify primary[2] or anesthesia provider; monitor respiratory status and sedation level closely until sedation level is stable at less than 3 and respiratory status is satisfactory.

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*Appropriate action is given in italics at each level of sedation.

[1] If opioid analgesic orders or hospital protocol do not include the expectation that the opioid dose will be decreased if a patient is excessively sedated, such orders should be promptly obtained.

[2] For example, the physician, nurse practitioner, advanced practice nurse, or physician assistant responsible for the pain management prescription.

[3] For adults experiencing respiratory depression give intravenous naloxone very slowly while observing patient response ("titrate to effect"). If sedation and respiratory depression occurs during administration of transdermal fentanyl, remove the patch; if naloxone is necessary, treatment will be needed for a prolonged period, and the typical approach involves a naloxone infusion. Patient must be monitored closely for at least 24 hours after discontinuation of the transdermal fentanyl.

[4] Hospital protocols should include the expectation that a nurse will administer naloxone to any patient suspected of having life-threatening opioid-induced sedation and respiratory depression.