



Pain Clinical Reasoning Guide

Steps/Questions	If Yes	If No	Watch out for
1. Have I identified their pain type?	Treatment implications	What do I need in order to do this?	<i>Assuming nociception</i>
2. Do I know they are safe? Medically, structurally, psychologically	Explain to the patient how you know they are safe	What do I need in order to know this?	<i>Investigation without indication. Missing mental health risks. Not getting the expected outcome may mean a relevant flag has been missed.</i>
3. Do I know the biopsychosocial contributors to their pain?	Ensure what can be addressed is being addressed.	Assess further/refer	<i>Focusing on biomedical only. Repeating unsuccessful, short lived treatments. Passive treatment focus.</i>
4. Do I know what the factors are impacting their function?	Ensure they are being addressed	Assess/refer	<i>Assuming pain must result in poor function</i>
5. Is my relationship with this patient sound and effective?			
a) Do I know where my patient is at? Beliefs, hopeless – helpless-hopeful, coping, goals, locus of control, readiness to engage in plan,	If they need help or a shift, what will help? Acknowledge all areas in which they are coping, or making an effort, or succeeding in.	Assess	<i>Clinician and patient in different places with different goals. Patient losing confidence and motivation May need to re-explain the safety step several times.</i>
b) What is happening for me? Have I ever felt uncomfortable or distressed with this patient?	Why? Patient: distress, addiction, personality disorder? Clinician: Is the assessment and the treatment plan complete and being followed? Clinician discomfort with uncertainty, distress?	Great	<i>Remember you are not a failure if you can't fix it Review your safety check and plan.</i>
Is this going as I expected?	great	Trust your instincts. Review above steps.	<i>Not recognising when to refer on or cease treatment. Measuring success only by pain reduction. Even the best treatment plan and performance can have limited results.</i>