10.12: Glossary

**Acute Pain:** Pain that usually starts suddenly and has a known cause, like an injury or surgery. It normally gets better as your body heals and lasts less than three months.

**Adjuvant analgesics:** Drugs with a primary indication other than pain that have analgesic properties in some painful conditions. The group includes numerous drugs in diverse classes such as gabapentin (an anticonvulsant) or amitriptyline (a tricyclic antidepressant).

**Chronic pain:** Pain that lasts six months or more and can be caused by a disease or condition, injury, medical treatment, inflammation, or an unknown reason.

**Immune-mediated disease process:** Occurs when the body’s immune system attacks the central nervous system.

**Misuse:** The use of illegal drugs and/or the use of prescription drugs in a manner other than as directed by a doctor, such as using in greater amounts, more often, or longer than told to take a drug or using someone else’s prescription.

**Muscle Spasticity:** Condition in which certain muscles are continuously contracted. This contraction causes stiffness or tightness of the muscles and can interfere with normal movement, speech, and gait. Spasticity is usually caused by damage to the portion of the brain or spinal cord that controls voluntary movement.

**Nociceptors:** Nerve endings that selectively respond to painful stimuli and send pain signals to the brain and spinal cord.

**Non-pharmacologic therapy:** Treatments that do not involve medications, including physical treatments (e.g., heat or cold therapy, exercise therapy, weight loss) and cognitive-behavioral treatments (e.g., distractions/diversions and cognitive behavioral therapy).
**Patient controlled analgesia (PCA):** To receive the opioid, the patient pushes a button on the PCA device, which releases a specific dose but also has a lockout mechanism to prevent an overdose. Included with hydromorphone or fentanyl.

**Prostaglandins:** Produced in nearly all cells and are part of the body’s way of dealing with injury and illness. Prostaglandins act as signals to control several different processes depending on the part of the body in which they are made. Prostaglandins are made at the sites of tissue damage or infection, where they cause inflammation, pain, and fever as part of the healing process.

**Vertigo:** A sense of spinning dizziness. It is a symptom of a range of conditions. It can happen when there is a problem with the inner ear, brain, or sensory nerve pathway.