Perioperative analgesia for Cardiothoracic Surgery has evolved in concert with increasing knowledge of the impact of pain on recovery, the origin of this pain, and new methods for treating it. Cardiothoracic Surgery is one of few areas where there is more general agreement between surgeons and anesthesiologists as to the importance of aggressive pain management. The reason for this agreement is that it has become increasingly clear to both specialties that pain puts patients with decreased cardiopulmonary reserve who undergo Cardiothoracic Surgery at greater risk for morbidity. The adverse consequences of under-treated pain are considerable and include serious medical complications, impaired recovery, and progression to chronic pain. Moreover, subtherapeutic acute pain management can be associated with long-term physical, psychological, and financial problems. Approximately 80% of patients experience acute pain after surgery. Of these patients, 71% had moderate to severe pain, with more patients experiencing pain after being discharged. Experiencing postoperative pain was one of the most common concerns (59%) of patients. Despite an increased focus on pain management programs and the development of new standards for pain management, many patients continue to experience intense pain after surgery. Additional efforts are required to improve patients’ postoperative pain experience.

OBJECTIVES:
At the end of this lecture the attendants will be able to:
• Recognize that acute postoperative pain is under-treated
• Translate understanding of acute pain mechanisms and opioid activity to improved pain management
• Discuss current management strategies for patients with acute postoperative pain.