Danish University Colleges

On a scale from one to ten
how can you read how much pain someone else has?
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Abstract Title: 
On a Scale from One to Ten

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Presenters
Gunvor Munch Hansen

Short Description of what will be discussed during the presentation
How you can read how much pain someone else has? In biomedicine there is a widespread use of Melzack and Walls gate-control theory that describes that pain is a bio-psycho-social phenomenon, where it is impossible to separate the different components from each other. Phenomenological theories about pain describes pain as unconscious and embodied, and characterized by its interiority that others cannot share with the pain sufferer. In both biomedicine and anthropology pain can be characterized as both a personal experience and a relational phenomenon.

I have conducted field work on an orthopedic surgical ward, where I have studied how nurses reads the patients pain and the reasons she has to relieve pain and how these reasons influence her reading of the patients pain. When the nurses on the orthopedic surgical ward reads the patients' pain, the nurse's senses is at stake in the immediate context. But her sensory impressions are not alone: They are influenced and shaped in a complex interaction with her past experiences with both her own and others' experience of pain and the knowledge she has that constitute her clinical gaze. In the immediate reading of the patient, the nurse's interpretation of what she observed was always affected by the doubt she had about the validity of the patients statement.

The nurses relations to the patients was also affected by the institutional requirements to use the VAS-scale to document the patient's pain, but the use of the vas-scale was just a small part of the double gaze that the nurse uses in her perception of the patient. Nurse classifications of patients also had impact on how nurses and patients interacted and interpreted each other. The nurses used the classifications as a kind of manual for how different types of patients should be perceived and what kind of actions she should choose in relation to the specific patient.

Some of the motivations the nurse has to relieve patients' pain, is also linked to her identity as a good nurse: If the nurse is good at reading the patient's pain and subsequent relieve the pain, she will be recognized as a good nurse at both the institutional and relational level. The better she can fulfill the institutional demands, the more institutional recognition she will get as a competent nurse.
And the better she can relieve pain and mobilize patients, the more recognition she gets on the relational level and thus enhance her identity as a good nurse.

5. **What will the audience take away from your presentation?**
   - Better understanding of the complex world of pain.
   - A listing of some of the factors that influence nurses perceptions of acute pain in patients in an orthopedic ward.

6. **Is this abstract connected to an organized session? If yes, please provide full session title.**
   - No, its not

7. **Biography of presenting author**
   Gunvor Munch Hansen is a lecturer at a Danish Nursing School. She teaches in anatomy and physiology, microbiology, pathology, religion and medical anthropology. She has made an anthropological study (field work and interviews) regarding how nurses understands patients with acute pain.