Comparison of patient and practitioner assessments of pain from commonly performed emergency department procedures

**Article summary:**

Urethral catheter insertion is the fourth most painful emergency department procedure based on patient pain assessments.

Of the 15 most frequent procedures performed on 1,104 patients at a university emergency department, urethral catheter insertion was the fourth most painful procedure based on patient pain assessments, behind nasogastric intubation, incision and drainage of abscesses, and fracture reduction. The mean patient pain score for urethral catheter insertion was found to be almost double the mean pain score for all procedures examined. For the five most painful procedures examined, including urethral catheter insertion, pain rating was essentially equivalent in those patients receiving anesthetics vs. those who did not. Practitioners should pay special attention to patients’ need for anesthesia prior to performing painful procedures such as urethral catheter insertion.
