

Pain management of patients with chronic renal failure

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Abstract

Background: Pain management is highly complex in patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD) because there is a very narrow margin between pain relief and toxicity. Opioids can accumulate in the body and cause adverse effects, such as, respiratory distress, sedation and myoclonus.

Methods: A total of 60 patients and 22 renal staff participated in the study. Questionnaires were administered to staff and patients at the Centre. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to the participants. Relevant statistical methods were used for analysis.

Results: Patients were on average 57 years of age, and all were on hemodialysis. Results for this study show that 98.3% of patients reported pain symptoms during dialysis and for 72.3% of the patients, the pain experienced was moderate to severe indicating that pain is a major symptom burden in this patient population. The most frequently reported symptoms were lower back pain (80%), lower leg pain (51,7%) and upper chest pain (46,7%%). Pain was frequently experienced by patients following the dialysis session (78,35%).

Conclusion: It is evident from the results of this study that pain management was neither done in a strategic manner nor was it tailored to the patient's specific needs. For staff, there were no formal, clinical pain management assessment instruments or follow-up regarding adherence to the recommendations for pain analgesics. Both patients and staff would benefit from awareness about different types of pain management therapies, (both pharmacological and non-pharmacological) and the long-term impact if pain continues to be under-diagnosed and under-treated.