Evaluation of effectiveness of pain management program in palliative nurse clinic for advanced cancer patients

Leung WM(1), Leung WY Carenx(1), Liu CF(1), NG MC Margaret(1), Wong KH(1)

(1)Department of Clinical Oncology, Queen Elizabeth Hospital

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Introduction
Pain is one of the most prevalent symptoms in advanced cancer patients. Effective pain management is therefore an essential component of palliative care services. Palliative care nurse plays an important role in various aspects of pain management, including pain score assessment, analgesic education, monitoring of drug compliance and treatment outcomes of analgesics. In the Palliative Day Center in QEH, patients who are prescribed new analgesics, including syrup Morphine, Durogesic patch, Tramadol and Gabapentin, are recruited into the pain management program. This program provides drug education talk and issues educational pamphlets to the patients together with phone follow up service.

Objectives
The objectives of the pain management program are: 1) To enhance effective pain management; 2) To improve drug compliance of patients to newly prescribed analgesics.

Methodology
A retrospective review was conducted of the outcomes of patients recruited into the pain management program from January to March 2014. Data was prospectively collected and entered into CMS according to a standardized protocol of the pain management program.

Result
A total of 21 patients were prescribed new analgesic(s) in the palliative care clinic from 1st January 2014 and 31st March 2014, and were recruited into the pain management program. Syrup morphine was the commonest newly prescribed analgesic (40%) followed by Tramadol (28%) and Gabapentin (28%). All 21 patients were followed up
by phone call. Twelve patients (57%) reported adequate pain control and nine patients (43%) reported inadequate pain control due to poor drug compliance mainly resulting from misconception. The palliative care nurse clarified any misconception about analgesics, provided drug education and reinforced the importance of drug compliance. The second phone call 2-3 days later found that all 9 patients had good compliance to the prescribed analgesics. Seven out of 9 patients had adequate pain control. The remaining two patients still suffered from pain despite optimal drug compliance. These two patients were triaged to earlier follow up in the palliative clinic to see doctor for stepping up of analgesics. The pain management program in palliative nurse clinic is effective in enhancing pain control in advanced cancer patients. Monitoring of drug effectiveness and compliance by phone, nurse can provide drug education and triage these patients for earlier appointment. All these contribute to effective pain management.