



Backgrounder

European survey of oncology nurse breakthrough cancer pain practices

BACKGROUND

- A European Oncology Nursing Society (EONS) survey amongst 1,618 oncology nurses was conducted in 12 European countries.
- The aim of the survey was to gain insight into:
 - Management of breakthrough cancer pain (BTCP).
 - BTCP practice patterns; assessment and management.
 - Level of confidence in managing BTCP episodes.
 - View on BTCP's impact on cancer patients' daily life
- The survey was supported with an educational grant by Nycomed International Management GmbH.

METHOD

- 1,618 nurses recruited - completion rate 72 % (1,164 nurses).
- Participating countries: The Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, The Netherlands, and the UK.
- The survey was conducted between 30 September 2010 and 15 November 2010.
- The nurses were recruited through EONS' website (www.cancernurse.eu) and in some countries also by invitation from the national oncology nursing societies or by invitation by email to nurses in cancer care on different wards.

RESULTS

Breakthrough cancer pain assessment and management

- The majority (64 %) of nurses had seen between 1-9 patients with breakthrough cancer pain within the last month.
- Almost 1 in 10 nurses were uncertain whether he/she had seen any patients with breakthrough cancer pain. This was particularly the case among nurses who had received the least amount of training, therefore finding it more difficult to identify breakthrough cancer pain.
- 46 % of nurses did not have a pain assessment tool to help them diagnose breakthrough cancer pain.
- 57 % of nurses did not receive any training on breakthrough cancer pain management.
- 36 % of nurses did not feel confident in advising patients on breakthrough cancer pain management.

Treatment of breakthrough cancer pain

- 57 % of nurses said oral opioids were used to treat breakthrough cancer pain.
- 38 % of nurses were not aware that medication specifically developed for breakthrough cancer pain exists.
- 19 % of nurses used non-pharmacological treatment with all patients.
- Nurses who had a pain assessment tool or had received training in breakthrough pain management were significantly more likely to be aware of medication specifically developed for breakthrough cancer pain being available.



Living with Breakthrough Pain

- 46 % of nurses said they think breakthrough cancer pain tends to affect patients 2-3 times a day.
- Moving around was seen as the activity which most exacerbates or prompts breakthrough cancer pain (79 %).
- Nurses reported that the majority of their patients (75 %) tended to describe their breakthrough cancer pain having a significant impact on their patient's' lives (77 %), including their enjoyment of life, mood and sleep.

Need for guidelines

- The majority of nurses (77 %) felt there was a need for more information on breakthrough cancer pain, in terms of more general information for patients and nurses and more formal guidelines on breakthrough cancer pain management.

DEFINITION OF BREAKTHROUGH CANCER PAIN

A transient (episodic) exacerbation of pain that occurs either spontaneously, or in relation to a specific predictable or unpredictable trigger, despite relatively stable and adequately controlled background pain.¹

REFERENCES

¹ Davies A et al. *The management of cancer-related breakthrough pain: Recommendations of a task group of the Science Committee of the Association for Palliative Medicine of Great Britain and Ireland. European Journal of Pain* 2009; 13:331-338.