A European Survey of Oncology Nurse Breakthrough Cancer Pain Practices

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Background

- Pain management plays an important role in oncology nursing.

- A European Oncology Nursing Society (EONS) survey amongst European oncology nurses was conducted.

- 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.
Method

- A survey was conducted between September 30 and November 15, 2010.
- 12 participating countries.
- 1,618 nurses recruited - completion rate 72% (1,164 nurses).
- 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.
The questionnaire was developed by the EONS Breakthrough Cancer Pain Working Group with the multidisciplinary advisory board assuming an overall scientific responsibility.

The final survey questionnaire consisted of 36 questions.

It was made in English and than translated into the local languages of the participating countries using standardized back forward procedure.
The questionnaire cont.

- Background characteristics of the nurse
- Pain management (treatment)
- Nurses’ experiences with BTCP
- Characteristics of BTCP (including definition)
- Their view on patients’ compliance
- Pain assessment and the use of tools
- Confidence in advising patients
- Impact of BTCP on daily life
- What may exacerbate/prompt the BTCP
Results
Survey completes by country

- Norwegian: 198
- French: 149
- Greek: 141
- Slovene: 113
- Hungarian: 107
- Danish: 95
- German: 82
- Czech: 80
- Swedish: 72
- Dutch: 52
- English: 42
- Finnish: 33
Definition of BTCP

Episodic pain that breaks through stable background pain: 72%
Spontaneous pain/unpredictable incident: 42%
Predictable incident pain: 22%
None of the above/not sure: 8%
Discuss pain management with their patients

98% of the nurses did discuss pain management with their patients.

- Pain relief: 88%
- Side effects of medication: 72%
- Onset of pain medication: 65%
- Duration of medication: 60%
- Pain management for specific pains: 51%
- Ease of use of medication: 49%
- Other aspects: 13%
46% of nurses did not have a pain assessment tool to help them diagnose BTCP.
Training in BTCP management

- 57% of the nurses did not receive any training on BTCP management.
If the nurses did not use any assessment tool and did not have any training in BTCP - they had more difficulty in distinguishing between background and BTCP.

36% of nurses did not feel confident in advising patients on BTCP management.
The majority of nurses felt there was a need for more information on BTCP.

- More general information for nurses on breakthrough pain: 77% Definitely, 21% Probably, 2% Probably not.
- Specific guidelines for nurses on breakthrough pain management: 72% Definitely, 23% Probably, 3% Probably not.
- More information on breakthrough pain for patients: 77% Definitely, 21% Probably, 2% Probably not.
57% of nurses said oral opioids were used to treat BTCP.
Treatment

- 38% of nurses were not aware that medication specifically developed for BTCP exists.
- Nurses who had a pain assessment tool or had received training in BTCP management were significantly more likely to be aware of medication specifically developed for BTCP.
Living with BTCP

46% of nurses said they think BTCP tends to affect patients 2-3 times a day.

- Less than once a day: 9%
- Once a day: 14%
- Two-three times a day: 46%
- More than three times a day: 16%
- Don't know: 15%
Living with BTCP

Moving around was seen as the activity which most exacerbates or prompts BTCP.

- Moving around: 79%
- When patients have an existing condition: 55%
- When patients are undergoing other treatment: 48%
- Eating: 34%
- Something else: 14%
- Nothing: 2%
- Don’t know: 6%
Nurses reported that 75% of their patients tended to describe their BTCP as severe.

77% of nurses said that BTCP had a significant impact on their patients’ lives.

- Enjoyment of life: 80%
- Mood: 76%
- Sleep: 75%
- Movement, e.g. walking ability: 74%
- Normal work (includes both work outside the home and housework): 73%
- General activity, including eating: 61%
- Relations with other people: 59%
Conclusion

- Need for:
  - Relevant training in assessment, management and treatment of BTCP.
  - Information about BTCP’s impact on quality of life.
  - BTCP guidelines.
  - Variations across countries