This manuscript was sponsored by an unrestricted educational grant from Amgen (Europe) GmbH.

References

Management of Febrile Neutropenia in Paediatric Patients

Experience from a shared Care System in Ireland.

Hilary Noonan, Staff Nurse

Fiona Brady, a colleague of mine, and I work in general paediatric wards in Limerick and Gaway, respectively. These wards provide shared care in conjunction with Our Lady’s Children’s Hospital (OLCH), located in Dublin. OLCH is the national referral and treatment centre for Childhood Cancers. The cancer unit at OLCH shares care with 16 paediatric units based at local hospitals throughout Ireland. Shared Care Centres provide general support for cancer patients. Their main focus of support is the medical and nursing management of chemotherapy-induced haematological toxicities. The most common dose-limiting haematological toxicity that shared care centres encounter as a result of chemotherapy is febrile neutropenia. Health care professionals should be aware of this, due to the seriousness of a febrile neutropenic episode, the resulting adverse events, and the need for prompt treatment of children presenting with the condition.

In May 2006 and I attended a TITAN study day (Training Initiative in Thrombocytopenia, Anaemia and Neutropenia). TITAN is a major new training initiative that is spearheaded by the European Oncology Nursing Society (EONS). TITAN encourages nurses to proactively apply their enhanced knowledge in the prevention, detection and management of these life-threatening conditions. As a result of this study day Fiona and I completed a dissemination project. We developed an education package from a shared care perspective. Our aim was to develop a concise, easily accessible and user-friendly education package on febrile neutropenia for nurses, doctors and other health care professionals.

The febrile neutropenia educational package we developed is based on OLCH guidelines and consists of a power point presentation, a pocket guides and educational package aims to maintain and improve the standard of care for febrile neutropenic cancer patients.

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Throughout this project we overcame many hurdles. For example, the cost of printing the pocket booklet by professional printers proved to be very expensive. Fortunately for us with the help of a friend we were able to print the booklet ourselves.

The principal outcome of our project was the production of a user-friendly educational package on febrile neutropenia primarily designed for health care professionals who care for paediatric cancer patients in shared care centres. Pending approval from OLCH, educational sessions in further shared care centres are planned. The impending publication of our pocket guide booklet and educational package aims to maintain and improve the standard of care for febrile neutropenic cancer patients.

I am delighted to inform you that our educational package won both the Irish and European TITAN dissemination competitions. As a result of TITAN we have been awarded a great opportunity. We will be presenting our educational package at the EOCO conference in Barcelona in September. Amgen Ireland Ltd. and the Irish Association for Nurses in Oncology whilst supporting TITAN have also been very supportive to us in making our idea become a reality!