

Journal Watch

The Management of Depression in Palliative Care: Draft European Clinical Guidelines

Rayner L, Higginson I, Price A, Hotopf M.

London: Department of Palliative Care, Policy & Rehabilitation/European Palliative Care Research Collaborative, 2009

(retrieved from www.kcl.ac.uk/schools/medicine/depts/palliative/arp/cbr/epcrc.html)

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Summary: Guideline Development Process

Objective:

- to produce an evidence-based clinical guideline for the management of depression in palliative care, on behalf of the European Palliative Care Research Collaborative (EPCRC)

Patient group covered:

- adults who present with depression or depressive symptoms in the context of palliative care

Target audience:

- all health care professionals involved in the provision of palliative care

Rigour of development

- guideline development group (clinicians & researchers, King's College, London)
- Expert Group (multi-national and multi-disciplinary, representatives from palliative care, clinical psychology, psychiatry, general practice, psychiatric pharmacy, social work, oncology and chaplaincy)
- Key clinical questions identified by Expert Group to define scope of the guideline
- Delphi method used to obtain and refine expert opinion on contentious recommendations
- Evidence provided by Cochrane Library, Medline, PubMed, Embase and other guidelines
- Cochrane review of antidepressants for depression in physical illness conducted by Guideline Development Group
- Oxford Centre of Evidence-Based Medicine (CEBM) system will be used to grade evidence and guidance recommendations

Contents

- Prevention
- Detection, diagnosis & assessment
- Patient management
- Treatments

Strengths

- Extensive literature review and consultation with heterogeneous multi-disciplinary group
- Clinically relevant - Key clinical questions based on importance to patients and clinicians
- Use of evidence based rating system (CEBM) to evaluate evidence & recommendations

Weaknesses

- Does not describe how Expert group was selected
- Unclear regarding nature of contentious issues, disparate views in the literature
- Does not describe criteria and process for achieving consensus

Relevance to Palliative Care

Assessment, diagnosis and treatment of depression in terminally ill patients are complex and challenging processes. The development of clinically relevant guidelines will improve assessment and management of depression in this vulnerable population.