

Prescribing of drugs for use outside their license in palliative care: survey of specialists in the United Kingdom

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Abstract:

(Summarized by Al-Shahri): This paper aimed at studying current practice of palliative care physicians in the UK regarding prescribing of medications outside the licensed indications or routes of administration. One hundred and eighty postal questionnaires were administered and 117 completed. All responses declared that a written consent from patients was not obtained and less than 5% of responses indicated that a verbal consent was obtained before prescribing a drug outside its licensed indication/route. More than 95% of responses indicated lack of documentation and information-sharing with health professionals when using medications outside the licensed indications/routes.

Comments:

Strengths:

1. Novelty and validity of the research question.
2. Good sample size and reasonable response rate.

Weaknesses:

1. The title does not perfectly reflect the content.
2. No reference to validity and reliability of questionnaire.

Relevance to palliative care:

It is not uncommon to use a number of medications in palliative care outside their licensed indication/route. Patients' rights in these situations need to be addressed while trying to avoid creating unnecessary anxiety among patients and their families.