

*Journal Watch* (Venous Thromboembolism)

**Have Palliative Care Teams' Attitudes Toward Venous Thromboembolism Changed? A Survey of Thromboprophylaxis Practice Across British Specialist Palliative Care Units in the Years 2000 and 2005**

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**Abstract:**

Palliative care patients are highly prothrombotic, yet there are no national guidelines for the prevention of venous thromboembolism (VTE). A survey was undertaken to explore thromboprophylaxis practice within British palliative care inpatients units and whether it changed over 5 years in keeping with emerging evidence. A descriptive semistructured telephone survey was conducted in April, 2000 and March, 2005 to explore current thromboprophylaxis practice. Seventy-four percent of units participated in 2000 and 91% participated in 2005. Units surveyed in 2000 revealed that 2% had thromboprophylaxis guidelines and up to 75% would stop ongoing low molecular weight heparin (LMWH) in a highly prothrombotic, good prognosis inpatient. The survey in 2005 indicated that thromboprophylaxis guidelines were being developed in 19% of units and only 18% of units surveyed would stop LM@H in a patient already receiving thromboprophylaxis ( $P < 0.001$ ). There appears to be a growing awareness of the problem of VTE in British palliative care inpatients, as evidenced by changes in attitudes and practice. Reasons for this are discussed.

**Comments:**

**Strengths/uniqueness:**

The response rate for the survey which is quite impressive at 91% (unusual for this type of questionnaires); and also it allows us to observe the evolving views of palliative care physicians regarding this controversial topic over time.

**Weakness:**

The variability of responses depending on whom answers the survey within the same SPCU could be interpreted as a weakness. However, it is expected that different physicians will have a different perspective regarding this particular topic.

**Relevance to Palliative Care:**

There is an increased awareness in the palliative care community about the relevance of thromboprophylaxis, a highly controversial area. This article provides a clear picture of the evolution of the views of palliative care physicians in the UK regarding the use of LMWH prophylactically. It also generates some discussion regarding the need for thromboprophylaxis guidelines, based on evidence, patient acceptability and adequate financial burden.