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2. Abstract Title

- An Audit of Chronic, Non-Cancer Pain Patients Experiences of High-Dose Opioid Treatments – Patients vs. Clinicians

3. Abstract Text

a) Title:

An Audit of Chronic, Non-Cancer Pain Patients Experiences of High-Dose Opioid Treatments

b) Background:

Mirroring the intensification of the Opioid Epidemic in the US, the number of prescription opioid related deaths has increased in the UK as well. This highlights the need for better prescribing practices so as to ensure patient safety. With an estimated 43% of the UK population experiencing chronic pain, the Faculty of Pain Medicine has introduced the Opioid Aware Programme which aims to enhance patient education and to improve prescribing practices as well as to promote a culture of appropriate clinical decision making concerning the use of opioids in the management of pain.

c) Aim and Objectives:

In light of the Opioid Aware Programme, this audit was designed to investigate chronic, non-cancer pain patients' experiences with high dose opioid treatments (≥ 120 mg of oral morphine or equivalent in 24hours), and to determine opioid awareness and prescribing practices amongst clinicians so as to identify gaps in current practices.

d) Methods:

This is a cross-sectional study which was conducted over a 5-week period whereby surveys were collected from both patients and clinicians of the Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust. Patients

who attended the hospital during the timeframe were reviewed for their opioid prescription. Those who fulfilled the selection criteria were invited to complete a patient's experience survey and responses from chronic pain patients were isolated for further analysis. At the same time, an online survey regarding opioid awareness and prescribing practices was also distributed to clinicians of the trust. Results from the two surveys were first analysed in isolation, and then simultaneously to identify inadequacies in patients experiences and current practices.

e) Main Results

- Patients Experiences:

Despite current guidelines discouraging the use of opioids in the treatment of chronic pain, 79.5% of patients were prescribed high-dose opioids on the background of chronic pain. 50% of them were given opioids for an extended duration of more than a year. This is reflective of poor opioid prescribing practices. Several deficiencies were also identified as part of patient's experience with opioid counselling as well as the shortfall in specialist referrals for patients with chronic pain.

- Clinicians Practices:

Despite the fact that 76% of the surveyed clinicians were involved in the care of patients on high-dose opioid treatments, only 16% were aware of the Opioid Aware Programme developed by the Faculty of Pain Medicine and 20% aware of the Opioid Risk tools. This is suggestive of poor awareness of current guidelines. Several deficiencies were also identified in current practices with regards to opioid drug counselling and treatment planning.

f) Conclusions:

To enhance patient's experience, patient information leaflet and high-dose opioid clinics can be developed in the future to aid patient education. In order to address the current deficiencies in opioid prescribing practices as well as drug counselling, standardised training programme can be developed for junior doctors and prescribers. Current guidelines and opioid treatment resources should also be better publicised so that clinicians are informed of recommended practices and care pathways involved in the management of pain.

4. Agreement

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- b) This audit was exempted of ethical approval, however, it was conducted under the approval from the Patient's Clinical Audit Department and Patient's Experience Team of the Manchester Royal Infirmary.
- c) There is no conflict of interest with regards to this audit.