Improving the Quality of Cancer Pain Management in an Academic Medical Center Emergency Department

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The impact and outcomes of the implementation of a pain management guideline and pain assessment standard operating procedure (SOP) in a cancer-specific emergency department are evaluated in this article. After implementation of the SOP, the number of pain assessments conducted per patient during hospitalization increased, as did the percentage of patients who underwent a pain assessment at admission, within one hour after analgesic medication was administered, and at regular intervals.

Methods

This retrospective, observational study used data retrieved from the Asan Medical Center electronic medical record system. A total of 1,993 patients visited the CED during the study period from August to September 2011 (before initiation of the CPCP, n = 891) and from February to March 2012 (after the initiation of the CPCP, n = 1,102). Patients aged 20 years and older, who stayed in the CED for more than 24 hours and experienced pain with self-reported numeric rating scale (NRS) scores of 4 or greater at the time of admission or during the CED stay were included in the study. Data from a total of 455 patients were used in the analysis.

Pain Assessment and Management

The SOP for pain assessment is mandated as one of the evaluation items. However, the scope of the evaluation is limited to the inpatient setting, leaving outpatient pain management less standardized or regulated. In addition, very few reported studies have evaluated the management of cancer pain in the outpatient setting, particularly in the emergency department (ED), where patients presenting with pain may be neglected because of a high priority being placed on urgent and life-threatening conditions. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the article. This study was supported, in part, by a grant (No. HI14C1061) from the Korean Health Technology Research and Development Project, Ministry of Health and Welfare, Republic of Korea. Yeon Hee Kim can be reached at kимyhee@amc.seoul.kr, with copy to editor at CJOINEditor@ons.org.

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