

Journal Watch

A review of short bowel syndrome and palliation: a case report and medication guideline.

Broadbent AM, Heaney A, Weyman K. J Palliat Med 2006; 9(6):1481-91.

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Abstract:

While patients with short bowel syndrome are not common in palliative care, they can present challenges for palliative care professionals. The case presented highlights a specific difficulty encountered. Many medications are poorly absorbed from a short bowel and alternative routes of administration need to be considered. A search was conducted to identify reviews, reports, and other articles from January 1960 to February 2004. MEDLINE, Cochrane library, and CINAHL (Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Library) and MIMs (Medimedia Australia) databases were searched. A review of major textbooks was also conducted. Information on the site of absorption time to peak plasma concentration, alternate routes, and pharmacokinetic information is summarized and presented in a table form. This case report and review should assist practitioners with the palliative management of patients with short bowel syndrome.

Comments:

Strengths/uniqueness: This review article summarizes the issues to be considered when prescribing oral medications to palliative care patients with short bowel syndrome. Some of the most commonly used classes of medication in this population are discussed and listed in a table, providing a helpful reference.

Weaknesses: The review is not systematic in nature, and therefore the quality of the information used to construct the review cannot be ascertained. A minor point is that errors in the text (e.g. spelling, grammar) detract from the overall impression of the paper.

Relevance to Palliative Care: Although short bowel syndrome is not a common disorder in palliative care patients, it can present challenges in pharmacotherapy when encountered. The prescribing of appropriate drugs and formulations is essential in order to achieve adequate symptom control.