Survey of anaesthetist's confidence with remifentanil patient controlled analgesia, and challenges to its use

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Introduction

Remifentanil patient controlled analgesia (PCA) is an established method of pain relief during labour, and can be an alternative to epidural analgesia. National guidance recommends it should only be used where it is used frequently, and local guidance exists (1).
Within the Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust anaesthetic department, there is a protocol for remifentanil PCA, but it is not frequently used, with seeming reluctance from many parties. We wanted to explore the reasons behind reluctance to use remifentanil PCA, and started with anaesthetists' opinions and what they felt limited it's use.

Method

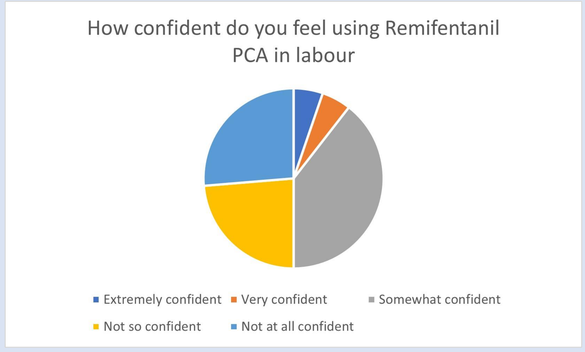
An online survey was disseminated to all training grade and consultant anaesthetists within the department using SurveyMonkey during January 2022.

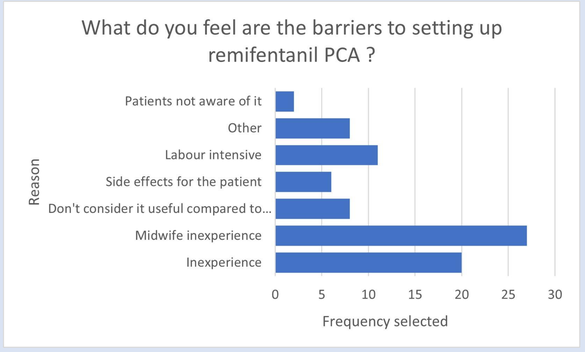
Questions

What is your grade?
How often have you used a remifentanil PCA on labour ward (in any centre)?
How confident do you feel using remifentanil PCA in labour?
Do you know where to find the guidelines for Remifentanil PCA use?
Have you seen the guidelines?
What do you feel are the barriers to setting up Remifentanil PCA?
Would a laminated instruction sheet kept with the remifentanil equipment help?
What do you feel would increase the uptake of remifentanil PCA?

Results

The survey was completed by 38 anaesthetists, including 20 non-consultants and 18 consultants. This represented an overall response rate of 40%, with a rate of 44% for non-consultants (trainees and clinical fellows) and 35% for consultants. 55% of respondents had never used remifentanil PCA, with only one respondent using it frequently. Only 10% of respondents were extremely, or very confident with its use. Inexperience and midwife inexperience were the commonly selected potential barriers to setting up remifentanil PCA. Results show 89% of respondents believed a laminated instruction sheet kept with the remifentanil instructions would help.





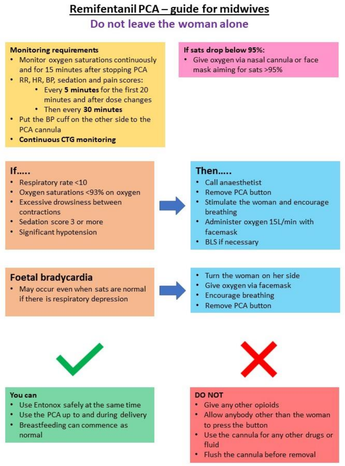
Discussion

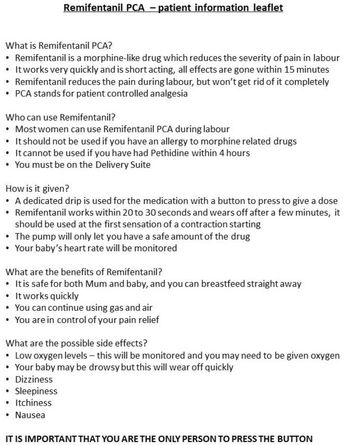
The findings from this survey would appear to be consistent with anecdotal opinion of challenges in remifentanil PCA use within our department. In order to overcome these problems, separate laminated information sheets have been designed for the use of anaesthetists and midwives, to be kept with the remifentanil PCA equipment. In addition, a redesign of the patient information leaflet is hoped to improve health literacy amongst our patients in relation to this issue. Following this a repeat survey is planned to learn from these interventions and further build upon them.

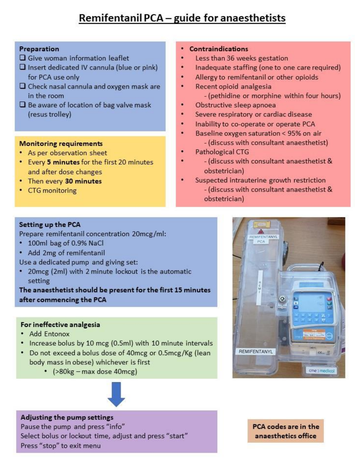
The risk of responder bias is innate to most surveys and indeed to this work, nevertheless this work marks a first step in a quality improvement process towards improved choice and outcomes for our patients locally.

Reference
1. RCOA, Chapter 9: Guidelines for the Provision of Anaesthesia Services for an Obstetric Population 2020. Published 31/01/2020. Available from: https://rcoa.ac.uk/gpas/chapter-9#section-5.3 (accessed Feb 2022)

Sheets for anaesthetists, midwives, and patient information leaflet. All are to be laminated and available in the appropriate places







To view these sheets in more detail please follow the QR codes