Adherence To Imatinib Mesylate In Patients Newly Diagnosed With Chronic Myeloid Leukemia In India Over The First Year Of Treatment And How To Improve Compliance

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Objective

- The aim of the study was to identify reasons for the failure of adherence in patients treated with imatinib for CML, and to detect a way to improve adherence.
- Therefore, a study was carried out to find causative reasons for the discontinuation of treatment, with the ultimate goal to improve rates of compliance.

Background

- Chronic myeloid leukemia (CML) is treated with the first-line agent imatinib, however; it was found that many patients in India's adherence to treatment had been poor
- Imatinib improves overall survival rate, continuous and adequate dosing is required for achieving optimal response.
- Noncompliance leads to advancing stages of cancer and increased hospitalizations, and therefore it is crucial to maintain adherence.

Methods

- A prospective review of 160 patients with newly diagnosed Philadelphia chromosome-positive CML was undertaken in order to check for rates of adherence to treatment with imatinib.
- The patients were equally distributed with 77 men and 83 women and had an average age of 40 years.
- Due to imatinib being the only option for most patients in India for CML, those who discontinued it were reinforced about the importance of being compliant with treatment
- Patients were scheduled with a follow up session one on one with the prescribing physician, and a minimum of 30 minutes was spent to answer questions, explain the benefits, and side effects.
- Rates of patients who restarted imatinib after reinforcement were recorded.

Results

- It was found that out of 160 patients over the initial year of treatment, 87 patients (54.3%) continued to take imatinib and 73 patients (45.6%) discontinued treatment.
- The most common reasons for discontinuation of treatment were due to adverse drug events such as headaches, weight gain, musculoskeletal symptoms, and GI disturbances.
- Of the 73 patients, most patients stopped taking imatinib 60 (82.3%) stopped taking it due to adverse drug events. 10 (13.6%) patients were lost to follow-up, and 3 (4.1%) patients wanted to pursue holistic methods of treatment.
- The 60 patients who stopped taking imatinib due to adverse drug events were counseled on the benefits of pursuing treatment despite some adverse effects.
- Out of the 60 patients who stopped imatinib due to adverse effects after counseling, 43 patients (71.6%) of patients restarted imatinib.

Summary

- Positive reinforcement and explanation of the benefits versus the side effects of imatinib is necessary in order to promote compliance to treatment of newly diagnosed chronic myeloid leukemia.

Conclusion

- The patient's adherence to imatinib in our study was found to be 46% with the majority of patients discontinuing treatment due to adverse effects.
- However, after counseling patients on the overall benefits of taking imatinib, compliance improved. The authors believe that compliance can be improved by taking the time to educate patients on the benefits of treatment with reinforcement.

References

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