1: JOP. 2003 Jan;4(1):1-10.

Links

Untreatable pain resulting from abdominal cancer: new hope from biophysics?

Marineo G.

Delta Research and Development, Research Center for Medical Bioengineering, Tor Vergata University, Rome, Italy.
g.marineo@mclink.it

CONTEXT: Visceral pain characterizing pancreatic cancer is the most difficult symptom of the disease to control and can significantly impair the quality of life which remains and increase the demand for euthanasia. AIM: To investigate a possible new method based on biophysical principles (scrambler therapy) to be used in the effective treatment of drug-resistant oncological pain of the visceral/neuropathic type. SETTING: Eleven terminal cancer patients (3 pancreas, 4 colon, 4 gastric) suffering from elevated drug resistant visceral pain. DESIGN: The trial program was related to the first ten treatment sessions. Subsequently, each patient continued to receive treatment until death. MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES: Pain measures were performed using the visual analogue scale before and after each treatment session and accompanied by diary recordings of the duration of analgesia in the hours following each single application. Any variation in pain-killing drug consumption was also recorded. RESULTS: All patients reacted positively to the treatment throughout the whole reference period. Pain intensity showed a significant decrease (P<0.001), accompanied by a gradual rise both in the pain threshold and the duration of analgesia. Nine (81.8%) of the patients suspended pain-killers within the first 5 applications, while the remaining two (18.2%) considerably reduced the dosage taken prior to scrambler therapy. No undesirable side effects were observed. Compliance was found to be optimal. CONCLUSIONS: The preliminary results obtained using scrambler therapy are extremely encouraging, both in terms of enhanced pain control after each treatment session and in view of the possible maintenance of effectiveness over time.

PMID: 12555009 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

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