



“Can you help me out doc?”

Treatment of pain in persons with a history of substance abuse

Introduction:

This self-directed learning exercise explores the approach to pain management in terminally ill patients with a history of substance abuse. Through a video case presentation and related readings, the student will identify challenges and optimal strategies for caring for this special population.

Learning objectives:

After completion of this module the student should be able to:

- 1) Define addiction, physical dependence, pseudoaddiction, and tolerance
- 2) Describe basic principles for prescribing controlled substances to patients with advanced illness and issues of addiction
- 3) Recommend appropriate guidelines for clinical management of terminally ill patients with addiction

ACGME Competencies:

Practice-based learning and Improvement, Medical knowledge, Professionalism, Patient care, Interpersonal skills and communication

What you need to complete the module:

- 1) Download and print the workbook
- 2) Read case presentation
- 3) Watch video (see instructions below)
- 4) Read accompanying article (in PDF):

Kirsh KL and Passik SD. Palliative care of the terminally ill drug addict. *Cancer Investigation* 2006;24:425-431.

- 5) Answer questions in workbook
- 6) Bring completed module to the palliative care workshop for discussion

Case presentation: Harvey Jones

45 year old male with a history of HIV and hepatitis C, who was recently diagnosed with hepatocellular carcinoma. He is a former heroin and alcohol abuser who successfully completed a treatment program 2 years ago. He presents to the outpatient clinic with mid-epigastric pain, described as a “dull ache”, 7/10 on a numeric scale, occurring most of the time and impairing sleep. He has been using acetaminophen with minimal relief. You determine that he needs an opioid analgesic and are exploring the best approach to managing his symptoms.

After reading the accompanying article and viewing the video, answer the following questions:

To view video:

Cut and paste this into your browser:

<http://depts.washington.edu/pallcare/video/painMGMTsubUSE.html>

or

If unable to directly access go to

<http://depts.washington.edu/pallcare/training/index.shtml>

Click on :Trigger tape video segments, Tape #5

Questions

1) Besides physical etiologies what are other reasons patients may state they are having “pain”?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

2) Is your patient an addict?

Make a list of patient characteristics and/or behaviors that come to mind that indicate to you that a patient may be a drug addict:

- a) “I lost my prescription for Vicodin.”
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

3) Differentiate between addiction, pseudoaddiction, physical dependency, and tolerance

Hint: for more definitions refer to:

- 1) http://www.eperc.mcw.edu/ff_index.htm
- 2) Click on Fast Facts #68 and #69, “Pain or Addiction?” and “Pseudoaddiction”

a) Addiction –

b) Pseudoaddiction –

c) Physical dependency-

d) Tolerance-

4) In the video clip, what were Mr. Jones’ concerns about receiving treatment for his pain?

- a)
- b)

- c)
- d)

5) What strategies did the physician use to assuage his concerns and improve clinical care for this patient?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

6) What other specific recommendations or guidelines could you utilize when caring for Mr. Jones or other terminally ill persons with issues of addiction?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

Reading:

Palliative Care of the Terminally Ill Drug Addict” by Kenneth L. Kirsh and Steven D. Passik in *Cancer Investigation*.

<http://dx.doi.org> and enter the following DOI #
10.1080/07357900600705565