Pain Management in Chordoma

Maryam Jowza, MD
Associate Professor
Department of Anesthesiology, Division of Pain Management
University of North Carolina- Chapel Hill

Types of Pain
- Nociceptive
- Neuropathic

Nociceptive pain
- Occurs in response to noxious stimuli and continues in its presence

Neuropathic Pain
- Burning, tingling

Pain Assessment
- Where is the pain?
- What does it feel like?
- Does it radiate anywhere?
- How severe is it?
- What makes it better/worse
Gabapentin (Neurontin)

- FDA approved for pain related to shingles and seizure disorders
- Off label use is very common:
  - Peripheral neuropathy
  - Neuropathic pain NOS
  - Widespread musculoskeletal pain
  - Pain around the time of surgery

Gabapentinoid Side Effects

- Drowsiness
- Confusion
- Unsteadiness when walking
- Swelling of the hands and feet

Pregabalin (Lyrica)

FDA approved for:
- Diabetic peripheral neuropathy
- Post herpetic neuralgia
- Fibromyalgia
- Neuropathic pain related to spinal cord injury

Antidepressants:

- Certain classes of antidepressants help with pain by enhancing the body’s own anti-pain signaling
- Improvement in pain is not related to improvements in mood
- Examples:
  - Tri cyclic Antidepressants: Amitriptyline (Elavil), Nortriptyline (Pamelor)
  - Serotonin-Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors: Duloxetine (Cymbalta), Venlafaxine (Effexor)
Antidepressant Side Effects

- Common: Nausea, dry mouth, change in sleep, constipation, tiredness
- Elderly – drop in blood pressure with standing, unsteadiness with walking
- Be mindful of drug-drug interactions

Muscle Relaxants

- For muscle spasticity, cramping
- Multiple agents on the market: Baclofen, Tizanidine, Cyclobenzaprine, Methocarbamol, Metaxalone
- Mechanism of action differs
- Common Side Effect: Drowsiness, dizziness

Opioids

- Best for short-term use
- Some neuropathic pain conditions do not respond to opioids
- Can lead to increase sensitivity to pain when used long-term
- Tolerance: Same dose no longer effective
- Dependence: Withdrawal
- Addiction: Use despite harm

Summary

- Chronic pain can be challenging to treat
- There is no one size fits all treatment: trial and error
- Treatment tends to be most successful with multi-disciplinary care

Thank you