Opiate overdose in Dublin

Dear Editor,

Patients who overdose on opiate drugs have a huge impact on A&E departments due to the workload they generate and their associated mortality. A prospective audit of all cases presenting with clinical evidence of opiate overdose was performed over a six-month period which coincided with the introduction of new methadone prescribing legislation.

One hundred and twenty-eight cases were identified. The mean age was 26 years and 73% were male. Forty-four per cent had taken other drugs. 2% presented on more than one occasion and 1% died during the episode in question. These statistics were all considerably less than those reported in other studies. Despite having critical physiological characteristics and often requiring emergency treatment, 65% discharged themselves against medical advice. A 32% increase in victims of acute opiate overdose was observed in the two-month period immediately after the introduction of the new methadone prescribing legislation, with a subsequent drop (47%) two months later (r = 8.0, p<0.05).

Although victims of acute opiate overdose are often critically ill, providing definitive treatment can be difficult and A&E departments have an important role to play in monitoring patterns of opiate drug use.

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References

Cannabis abuse in Iran

Dear Editor,

Virtually every aspect of public life in Iran was affected by the Islamic revolution in 1979. Many government policies were altered having been considered unIslamic, including the drug policy. The new regime made alcohol a prime target and provided a new national campaign against drug abuse. Drug laws became stricter with extensive use of the death penalty for all illegal substances is arrest and probable imprisonment. Alcohol is both religiously and socially downgraded if they smoke or drink. This research was confined to Shiraz, so care must be taken not to generalise these findings to the entire population.

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Reference

Prostatic carcinoma presenting as testicular mass

Dear Editor,

Metastases to the testis are rare but when present the prostate should be considered as a probable primary site. We present a case in which a testicular metastasis was the presenting sign and the only site of spread of prostatic carcinoma.

An 89-year-old male presented with a 36-hour history of right testicular pain and swelling. There was no dysuria. There was a mass at the lower pole of the right testis. Rectal examination revealed a smoothly enlarged firm right lobe of prostate. Ultrasound confirmed a 3cm lesion at the lower pole of the testis. Alpha-fetoprotein and b human chorionic gonadotrophin (HCG) were normal. Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) was 7.2ng/ml, but this was associated with a coliform urinary tract infection. A right radical orchidectomy was performed. Histology revealed an adenocarcinoma staining strongly positive for PSA and prostatic specific acid phosphatase (PSAP), confirming a diagnosis of metastatic prostatic carcinoma. An isotope bone scan and computer tomography (CT) revealed no metastases.

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