

# An audit of nausea and vomiting in children receiving chemotherapy at the SBAH Paediatric Oncology Unit

Hanneke v.d. Walt

## Introduction

- Nausea and vomiting are the two side effects that are feared the most amongst patients receiving chemotherapy as cancer treatment.
- If not managed:
  - Dehydration
  - Electrolyte imbalances
  - Anorexia
  - Mallory-Weiss tears of oesophagus
- This leads to extended hospital stay, increased health burden and can cause major setbacks in the treatment of patients.

## Objective

- Determine whether nausea and vomiting as side effects of chemo therapy is properly managed at the Paediatric Oncology unit at Steve Biko Academic Hospital.
- By looking at:
  - Nausea (subjectively)
  - Vomiting
  - Eating habits
  - Anti-emetics administered

## Method

- Observational descriptive study
- Over a 2 week period
- Questionnaire was used, making use of Baxter faces adapted for vomiting to measure nausea.
- Vomiting was measured by looking at the frequency of vomiting.
- Eating habits were also recorded

## Questionnaire

[illegible]

## Results

- 24 Participants in the study
- Median age: 6.5 years (range 3 – 15 years)
- 16 males (67%) and 8 females (33%)
- The anti-emetic that was mostly prescribed was Ondansetron (5HT<sub>3</sub>-receptor antagonist)
- Only 2 (9.5%) of the children receiving chemotherapy did not receive an anti-emetic on one occasion of vomiting.

## Results

- 11(52%) had one or more episodes of vomiting.
- 5 of these children reported to have vomited more than once in a 24 hour period.
- 10 of the children who did vomit, did so within 24 hours of receiving chemotherapy.
- 8 of the children who did vomit received moderate to high emetogenic chemotherapy.

## Appetite

- 9 (42.9%) of the patients recorded one or more episodes of poor eating.
- In 8 of these children the episode of poor eating was within 24 hours of receiving chemotherapy.
- 6 of the children who ate poorly received a chemotherapy drug that has high to moderate emetogenicity.

## Discussion

- More than half of the children who received chemotherapy vomited within 24 hours, despite receiving Ondansetron.
- Almost half of the children who received chemotherapy had episodes of poor eating after receiving the treatment and this was within 24 hours after receiving chemotherapy.
- Most children however choose the first smiley on most days.

## Recommendations

- Anti emetic should be given routinely as prophylaxis for nausea and vomiting.
- The route of administration should be clearly defined.
- Shortage of intravenous Ondansetron should be communicated to the doctors timeously.
- The in-take and out-put chart must be completed in detail and considered.
- Second line therapy should be considered early in patients receiving highly emetogenic chemotherapy.

Questions?

