



Association for
Palliative Medicine

Article of the Month

February 2016

The Burden of Polypharmacy in Patients Near the End of Life

Michael J. McNeil, Arif H. Kamal, Jean S. Kutner, Christine S. Ritchie, Amy P. Abernethy
J Pain Symptom Manage. 2016;51(2):178–183

In a secondary data analysis of a multi-centre randomised trial, medication burden of 244 adults estimated to be in the last year of life taking a statin for primary cardiovascular disease prevention was evaluated. Patients took an average of 12 medications at enrolment and 11 medications at death or study termination. Antihypertensives, broncholytics/bronchodilators, laxatives, antidepressants, and gastric protection drugs were the most common classes of medications prescribed near the end of life.

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Should we involve terminally ill patients in teaching medical students? A systematic review of patient's views

Harris DG, Coles B, Willoughby HM.
BMJ Supportive & Palliative Care 2015;5:522–530.

A systematic review using narrative synthesis explored how terminally ill patients feel about being involved in undergraduate medical teaching. Seven studies with 269 patients (mostly hospice based) were included. Patients were generally in favour of being involved in teaching. Negative aspects included concerns about being physically examined; finding it tiring and feeling unable to decline.

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Prepared by: Jason Boland, on behalf of the APM science committee