



Association for
Palliative Medicine

Article of the Month

November 2018

Pre-emptive prescription of medications for the management of potential, catastrophic events in patients with a terminal illness: A survey of palliative medicine doctors

Katz, N. T., Sacks, B. H., Le, B. H., & Hynson, J. L. (2018). *Palliative Medicine*. (published online ahead of print).

In this national survey of Australasian palliative care specialists, most clinicians had prescribed anticipatory medications for catastrophic terminal events >5 times a year, but only a minority based their prescribing on evidence or written guidance. Many were aware of error or patient harm related to sub-optimal prescriptions. Though response rate was only 22%, the authors argue that their findings support the case for standardised language and guidelines in this area of practice.

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Symptom prevalence and quality of life of patients with end-stage liver disease: A systematic review and meta-analysis

Peng, J.-K., Hepgul, N., Higginson, I. J., & Gao, W. (2018). *Palliative Medicine*. (published online ahead of print)

This review synthesises evidence from 80 studies, finding that symptom burden in end stage liver disease is comparable to other advanced illnesses. Pain, breathlessness and muscle cramps were the commonest symptoms. Decompensated liver disease was associated with increased symptom burden and poorer quality of life. The authors argue for a multidisciplinary approach to symptoms, and timely intervention especially when disease is decompensated

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