

Adherence assessment of multiple myeloma patients who receive oral treatment with immunomodulatory drugs in haematology / oncology group practices

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Introduction: The treatment of multiple myeloma (MM) has evolved rapidly over the past decade due to the introduction of novel agents. Immunomodulatory drugs (IMiDs) like thalidomide, lenalidomide and pomalidomide have been approved since 2006 and are administered orally. However, with the oral administration of these drugs adherence becomes crucial for the success, safety and effectiveness of treatment. We assessed the adherence of MM patients receiving IMiDs in haematology / oncology group practices with the help of different data sources.

Methods: All patients who had an IMiD treatment for at least 3 months were recruited into the study after obtaining informed consent. Computer assisted personal interviews of MM patients and, if possible, of their caregivers were conducted. Attending oncologists evaluated the patient's adherence with the help of a standardized questionnaire. In addition a retrospective analysis of prescription data was conducted. These data were analysed statistically using SPSS.

Results: 83 MM patients with a median age of 72 (37–85) were identified. 70% were male, 30% female. The median number of prescribed drugs per patient was 9 (1–20). Prescription data could be evaluated in terms of adherence in 64 patients (78%). Based on prescriptions the mean adherence rate was 98%. Patients assessed themselves and their myeloma therapy on a Likert scale ranging from «0» to «100» with higher scores indicating higher agreement. Mean values were as follows: reliability (98), tolerability (86), efficacy (90) and importance for health (93). Only 1 patient (1%) regarded pill-taking as difficult or complicated and 98% stated to take their pills «always» or «almost always» as prescribed by their oncologist. 48 caregivers, mostly female (77%), with a median age of 66.5 years (30–84) could be interviewed additionally. Caregivers assessed patient's reliability (96) as well as tolerability (83) and efficacy (88) of the myeloma therapy quite similar to the patients. The same applies to the treating oncologists who evaluated patient's reliability as well as tolerability and efficacy of the prescribed drugs as follows: 97.5, 85 and 85.

Conclusions: Our study suggests that despite the possible side effects associated with IMiDs patients are able to adhere to the treatment schedule. Adherence data from patients, caregivers and physicians were concordant. Nonadherence was not a major problem of our study.