

Neuropathic pain in primary care

A general practitioners view



Impact of pain in general practice

- Pain the third most common reason to see your gp
- Almost 1 in 7 people suffer chronic pain
- 20% of these for over 20 years!
- Chronic pain sufferers visit gp five times more frequently than others
- Uk wide 5million gp appointments per year-not including home visits!!
- 1 in 5 chronic pain sufferers have a neuropathic element to their pain



How often do we see neuropathic pain?

- Relatively common condition, but can be easy to miss or overlook.
- Studies vary, but thought to affect between 2 and 4 % of general population.
- Some studies as high as 7 % !!
- Taking lower number means each gp in NI has 88 patients with neuropathic pain
- The vast majority of these patients can have their treatment started early in primary care
- Uncomplicated and quite safely.



Where do we see neuropathic pain?

- Diabetics
- Post shingles
- Post surgery
- Cancer and palliative care
- Multiple sclerosis
- Post stroke
- Sciatica
- H.i.v.
- amputees



Diabetes

- Rising incidence- type 2
- Direct correlation between glycaemic control and developing neuropathy
- Approximately 12% of type 1 diabetics have peripheral neuropathy
- Approximately 32% type 2 diabetics have peripheral neuropathy.
- Improved chronic disease management of diabetes, q.o.f.driven should decrease incidence of diabetic neuropathy



Neuropathic pain and underlying disease

- Cauda equina syndrome
- Malignancy
- Diabetes
- Infection
- Trauma
- Alcohol
- Vitamin deficiencies
- Often investigations will be required to exclude systemic illness.



What the patient says on history

- A good history can make the diagnosis
- Get the patient to describe their pain in their own words
- Use open questions
- Burning , stinging ,shooting ,stabbing
- Electric shocks ,numb ,dead,pins and needles
- Sensitive to touch,heat or cold
- Ordinary painkillers made no difference



Diagnostic tools?

- Leeds assessment-lanss.
- Pain detect
- Validated questionnaires to aid detection and diagnosis of neuropathic pain
- Quick and easy to use
- Patient fills them in
- Includes a pain score
- Readily available and inexpensive
- A screening tool?



The guidelines

- Designed for primary care usage
- Likely to be broadly welcomed
- Appear user friendly
- Assist in standardization of treatment-upwardly
- Will improve diagnosis
- Earlier treatment
- More selected referrals
- Training tool for undergrads and postgrads in primary care
- Affirms good practice
- Should be good news for patients in pain.

