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P283 -Change in frequency of haemodialysis related cramps over the past decade :- is modern dialysis better tolerated?

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Introduction

Haemodialysis related cramps are common and can lead to negative experiences for patients and premature cessation of dialysis¹. Causes for cramps have been thought to include hypotension² and changes in electrolyte levels³. There have been different methods used to remedy cramps, such as use of quinine sulphate⁴ and intradialytic exercise⁵.

It was noted that prescriptions of quinine sulphate on our unit had declined over the years. Therefore this study aims to investigate the current incidence of cramps on the dialysis unit and compare it to a similar study in 2007, and factors that may influence them.

Methods

Patients were interviewed on their monthly blood collection days regarding cramp frequency, site, severity, onset, and whether they were on any medications to remedy them. Their pre and post dialysis blood pressures, weight and electrolytes were also collected in order to investigate whether changes in these parameters were associated with cramps. For continuous data, independent sample t-tests were used to make comparisons between the two time periods; and between those that did and did not experience cramps.

Results

Interviews were completed with 66 patients, whereas in 2007 94 patients were interviewed over several months resulting in data from 429 sessions. There was no significant difference in the incidence of intradialytic cramps between 2007 and 2019 (7% vs. 12%, $p=0.3$).

From the 2019 cohort, most patients stated that they experience cramps at some point (67%). The predominant site of cramps was the legs (75%) and most patients recalled that onset was within the last hour of a session (41%). The most common action taken to remedy them was movement (80%). In general, staff were not alerted by the patient (61%). There was no significant difference in measured parameters between sessions with and without cramps in 2019. In 2007, % weight loss was greater in those with cramps ($P=0.04$).

41 of 94 (44%) patients in 2007 used medication for cramps, compared with 10 of 66 (15%) in the 2019 population.

Discussion

Overall, we observed no difference in the incidence of cramps when comparing 2007 and 2019. The use of medication to remedy cramps is lower in the 2019 group. It may be that cramps are now less severe overall, and we are less aware of them as a result.

Other possible associations may be that in comparison to 2007, there is a reduction in mean weight loss which suggests we have a less aggressive approach to fluid removal on dialysis in 2019. It is also notable that in the 2019 group: kt/V is higher, and haemodiafiltration is more widely deployed.