

New Advances in Chemotherapy Induced Nausea and Vomiting

Speaking at the Oncology Associates Head Nurse/Practice Manager meeting in Las Vegas, NV on March 30th, Cynthia Rittenberg, RN, MN, AOCN, presented background of the evolution of antiemetic control the last 25 years. She noted that excellent control of chemotherapy induced nausea and vomiting (CINV) is achievable today using available drugs in the best way possible. However, there is still opportunity for improvement.

Cindy reviewed the Unifying Guidelines in detail. Five basic standards include:

1. The primary goal is prevention rather than treatment of CINV.
2. There are no clinically meaningful differences in efficacy and toxicity among the currently available 5-HT₃ receptor antagonists.
3. The lowest most effective dose should be used.
4. A single dose regimen given prior to chemotherapy is as effective as multiple dose schedules.
5. In the acute setting, a corticosteroid should be added to the 5-HT₃ whenever possible.

Finally, Cindy discussed two exciting new developments in the effort to improve CINV control. Aprepitant is a new class of agent, an NK-1 receptor antagonist, recently approved by the FDA as Emend®, in combination with other antiemetic agents for the prevention of acute and delayed nausea and vomiting associated with initial and repeat courses of highly emetogenic cancer chemotherapy. An oral agent, aprepitant 125 mg is given 60 minutes prior to chemotherapy (in combination), then an 80 mg capsule is taken days two and three.

Palonosetron, a next generation 5-HT₃ receptor antagonist, is noted for its prolonged half-life, greater potency and higher binding affinity than currently available drugs in this class. Multiple centers in the US and Europe have participated in Palonosetron trials. Cindy spoke about a particular phase III study in patients receiving moderately emetogenic chemotherapy where a single dose of palonosetron administered before initiation of chemo showed prolonged activity up to five days, superior control in the acute and delayed setting and higher quality of life scores when compared to a currently available agent.



Cindy Rittenberg, RN, MN, AOCN



Members listened intently to the featured speakers.