

EXPLORING EARLY STAGE CANCER PATIENTS' EXPERIENCES WHEN BEING PRESCRIBED OPIOIDS



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Background

- Cancer patients often require opioids to manage cancer-related pain¹
- Recent calls for a balance between adequate pain relief and minimizing harms have emerged amidst the opioid crisis and known short and long-term side effects of opioids¹
- Patient views on this are lacking
- Aims were to understand:
 - Patient experience of being prescribed opioids for pain management
 - Patients views on how to enhance safety

Methods

- Qualitative Study n=16
- Semi-structured one on one interviews with early stage breast, lung, colorectal, or head and neck cancer patients
- Methodology of Interpretive Description² was used to analyze transcribed data

Results Demographic Information n=16

Variable	Descriptive / Measure
Sex	
Male	n=12
Female	n=6
Age	Range 18-79
Education level	Majority had > high school education
Income level	Majority between \$50,000-\$80,000 CAD
Race	
White/Caucasian	n=13
Black	n=3
Time since diagnosis	Majority 5 years or more
Cancer Stage	
I	n=2
II	n=7
III	n=7

Results

Decision to start or continue opioids was influenced by impact of pain on quality of life and past experiences.

Barriers to opioid use included lack of education, strained relationships, loss of control, and shame

The only way I've been able to live my life in the way that I'd like to, good quality of life has been possible because I've been prescribed opioids.

So I've seen people that have addiction, so I'm cautious about what I put in my body

Well it was a very difficult decision and I ended up- I was with a physician who was not comfortable prescribing them to me

Well I think there was a stigma about people taking opioids. And then the other part I felt like I'm a bad person to be taking them.

Results

To enhance safety, patients endorsed involvement of pharmacists, education, methods to track opioid use, family involvement, access to online resources.

Patients want fulsome discussion of harms and risk of misuse

Educating people about how to use it well and how to use it a good way... that's important

Every time you go to the pharmacy they tell you can get addicted and everything you need to know

If you were given opioids for the first time I think you should have to go to a website and look at all of the pros and cons and all the suggestions. I don't think doctors have the time

The biggest issue that I have is that no one has ever explained to me what the effects of long-term use or short-term use of opioids are

Conclusions

- Utilizing a personalized approach, building rapport, and fostering autonomy are necessary to minimize risk of opioid related harm in early stage cancer
- Patient and family education about proper use, side effects, risk of misuse are imperative
- Pharmacists are crucial team members to promote opioid safety

References

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2. Thorne, S. (2008). Interpretive Description. Walnut Creek, CA. Left Coast Press.