ROLE OF NURSES IN A MULTISCIPLINARY TEAM MANAGING PATIENTS AT RISK FOR OSTEONECROSIS OF JAW (ONJ): A FIFTEEN-YEAR EXPERIENCE

Elisabetta Ferrero¹, Paola Brigo, Daniela Tartara¹, Carmela Riccio¹, Antonella Fasciolo¹, Vittorio Fusco¹

¹ Azienda Ospedaliera SS. Antonio e Biagio e Cesare Arrigo

Funding: The author(s) received no specific funding for this work.

Potential competing interests: The author(s) declared that no potential competing interests exist.

Abstract

Osteonecrosis of the Jaw (ONJ) is a serious event, with negative consequences on the Quality of Life of advanced cancer and myeloma patients. Antiresorptive drugs (bisphosphonates and denosumab) are of great clinical benefit, they impose careful oral health monitoring in order to prevent the occurrence of ONJ. On November 2005, at Alessandria Hospital, an ONJ Multidisciplinary Team for the prevention, the diagnosis and the treatment of ONJ was established; within the team, nurses are active as case-managers. The case manager nurses became the figure of coordination of diagnosis path, treatment and care, as well as a reference for the patient and the whole multidisciplinary team. The team nurses are also involved in data collection and processing, by monitoring the clinical care pathway both for practice patients and for study protocol patients. At March 2021, more than 900 patients were seen by the multidisciplinary group, with data registered on charts and database.

In our experience, nurses are active members of the Multidisciplinary Team, playing multiple roles: case manager taking charge of a patient, when following and supporting him/her during first visits, diagnosis and treatment; coordinator of the procedures to be implemented, indicated by several medical specialists; health educator implementing proper health interventions; data management and participation in study protocols, hence outlining the role of the research
Background: The occurrence of ONJ is serious, with potentially negative consequences on the QoL of cancer patients and rarely life-threatening or fatal. Antiresorptive drugs (biphosphonates and denosumab) are of great clinical benefit, but it is mandatory to monitor carefully their effect on oral health in order to prevent the occurrence of ONJ, or to obtain an early diagnosis. On November 2005, at Alessandria Hospital, an ONJ Multidisciplinary Team for the prevention, the diagnosis and the treatment of ONJ was established; within the team, nurses are active as case-managers. We update our experience after six years at light of international reports about role of nurses in management of ONJ cases.

Methods: The case manager nurse is the figure of coordination of diagnosis path, treatment and care, as well as a reference for the patient and the whole multidisciplinary team. The nurse taking charge of the patient is responsible for:

a) booking of the first dental visit and control visits (pre-treatment evaluation, whenever it is possible);
b) booking of X-rays of the jaws (panoramic dental radiography) or other diagnostic tests;
c) monitoring the procedure followed from each patient, liaising contacts between different specialists and updating clinical documentation;
d) information and education on behavioral factors for an adequate and proper oral hygiene and the risk factors for the onset of ONJ;
e) booking of Computed Tomography (CT) scan in case of suspect of ONJ;
f) data collection and processing.

Results: We followed 905 patients treated with BPs and/or denosumab, including both patients receiving treatment at Alessandria Hospital and patients referred by other hospitals for consultation or second-opinion. ONJ was suspected in 127 patients (45 male, 82 female); in 103 cases (103/127, 81.1%) a final ONJ diagnosis was registered according to Italian SIPMO-SICMF definition. The ONJ case distribution in the several disease subgroups was: 40 (38.8%) breast cancer; 16 (15.5%) prostate cancer; 11 (10.6%) myeloma; 7 (6.8%) renal cell cancer; 4 (3.9%) lung cancer; 7 (6.8%) other cancers; 18 (17.4%) osteoporosis and other non-malignant disorders. All the patients were cared by team nurses in all different moments of clinical history (suspect, diagnostic workup, diagnosis, and multidisciplinary discussion of the case).

Conclusions: nurses are able to be active members of the ONJ Multidisciplinary Team, playing multiple roles: case manager; coordinator of the procedures to be implemented; health educator; data manager, and research nurse.

References


10. a,bAlberto Bedogni, Giuseppina Campisi, Vittorio Fusco, Alessandro Agrillo. (2013). Raccomandazioni clinico-terapeutiche sull’osteonecrosi delle ossa mascellari associata a bisfosfonati e sua prevenzione.
