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- E-Learning – Initiation to Palliative Care for Nurses
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CALENDAR

Lien Centre for Palliative Care does not have any events at this time. Please submit your contact details (<http://www.duke-nus.edu.sg/lcp/contact-lcp>) to us should you like to be kept updated on upcoming events.

METHADONE SWITCH @ HOME: REDISCOVERING AN OLD FRIEND IN A NEW PLACE



Dr Richard Yap was our September SHC-LCPC Multidisciplinary Forum speaker. He shared his experiences in switching methadone in home settings for patients with refractory pain.

He began with a brief history of the drug, methadone, its uses and the risks associated with it. Despite the known risk, methadone is a popular analgesic agent due to its long and widely variable plasma half-life. It is inexpensive and relatively effective in pain management, especially for cancer and chronic pain.

The methadone switch is recommended for an inpatient hospice, specialist palliative care unit or in a hospital setting, under the care of specialist supervision. The patients need to be closely and carefully monitored for potential side effects. Reliable and competent caregivers are required in order for the conversion to be performed at home, in addition to a trained medical home care team.

Dr Yap shared some successful cases from HCA. One method is to start with a low dose and proceed slowly. Another option is the rapid conversion method. If the patient is in a home setting, HCA does at least two home visits a week to the patients' house, in addition to a daily phone call to monitor pain control and adverse effects. Caregivers are given a diary to record the patients' pain and medication daily. Titration is to be performed every five days to a week.

In conclusion, Dr Yap said that conversion to methadone is a reasonable approach for cancer patients who fail to respond to other opioids. With proper supervision, close and careful monitoring, methadone rotation and titration at home are also feasible and safe.

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