

ALGOPLUS and DOLOPLUS

Mrs K, aged 86, a widow, was described as being an active woman, and belonged to a number of associations in her village. Sadly, over the course of the summer, her family noticed a change in higher functions, with memory problems, behavioural problems and episodes of confusion; this was combined with coordination problems, particularly when walking.

The patient was aware of those anomalies, but attempted to mask them. An MRI of the brain at the end of the summer showed the presence of an invasive process in the corpus callosum, with a more marked peritumoral oedematous reaction in the left hemisphere; the lesion suggested a probable glioblastoma. Any form of neurosurgical procedure was ruled out; only neoadjuvant chemotherapy was proposed. Intravenous corticotherapy in parallel temporarily improved the clinical picture, but her condition changed again after a while. Our Home Hospitalisation department was then approached to provide end of life care.

On the day of admission, Mrs K was totally dependent for all everyday living activities. Difficulties with speech and comprehension made any verbal communication hard. Pain assessment using the ALGOPLUS scale, automatically done on admission, gave a score of 0/5. Indeed, there were no somatic complaints or unusual positions adopted, no protection of the painful area. Her face was calm, relaxed, and her sleep normal.

Washing and dressing had to be done wholly by caregivers, but were not affected by any pain. Similarly, while the patient had lost the ability to walk autonomously, that was not linked to pain in any way. As for psychosocial reactions, even though communication was affected, her social life drastically reduced and behavioural problems more and more evident, such disturbances were not linked to any kind of pain.

A fortnight after home hospitalisation began, caregivers were alerted by a few changes in Mrs K's behaviour when receiving care. Indeed, she reacted unusually to washing, particularly when touched by gloves and towels, and also when her clothes brushed against her, chiefly around the upper and lower right limbs: she would withdraw her limbs **{score}**, grimace **{score}**, and groan **{score}**. However, washing was completed, albeit with greater delicacy than on previous days **{score}**. However, moving from the bed to a wheelchair with the aid of a patient hoist seemed very uncomfortable and the team decided not to lift Mrs K **{score}** who, once laid down again, looked calmer once again **{score}**.

The family said they had not noticed any change in sleeping **{score}**, but had possibly seen an increasingly marked lack of interest in the world around her, difficult to interpret (development in brain condition? discomfort?).

Solution

Comments

On admission, pain assessment using the ALGOPLUS scale gave a score of 0/5.

A fortnight later, the caregivers decided to assess pain using the DOLOPLUS scale. That could be completely justified by the fact that the caregivers then had a more detailed knowledge of the patient, but also because the times when the patient seemed to be in pain were not constant. Assessment using the ALGOPLUS scale when Mrs K was comfortably settled in her bed could have given a false result because Mrs K had a relaxed appearance when lying down.

A fortnight after home hospitalisation began, caregivers noticed a few changes in Mrs K's behaviour when receiving care, which alerted them. Indeed, she reacted unusually to washing, particularly when touched by gloves and towels, and also when her clothes brushed against her, chiefly around the upper and lower right limbs: she would withdraw her limbs **{DOLOPLUS item 3 / score 1}**, grimace **{DOLOPLUS item 4 / score 1}**, and groan **{DOLOPLUS item 1 / score 1}**. However, washing was completed, albeit with greater delicacy than on previous days **{DOLOPLUS item 6 / score 1}**. However, moving from the bed to a wheelchair with the aid of a patient hoist seemed very uncomfortable and the team decided not to lift Mrs K **{DOLOPLUS item 7 / score 2}** who, once laid down again, looked calmer once again **{DOLOPLUS item 2 / score 0}**.

The family said they had not noticed any change in sleeping **{DOLOPLUS item 5 / score 0}**, but had possibly seen an increasingly marked lack of interest in the world around her, difficult to interpret (development in brain condition? discomfort?). That scoring could cover the 3 psychosocial reaction items, but it is difficult to know whether the changes are linked to pain or to developments in her central nervous system problems; items 8, 9 and 10 were therefore not scored.

Overall score on the DOLOPLUS scale: 6/21

The introduction of step 2 analgesic treatment enabled Mrs K to look relaxed once again under all circumstances and the DOLOPLUS scale score on D1, D2 and D3 was 0/21.