Symptom Management in Advanced Cancer

Fourth edition

Robert Twycross DM Oxon, FRCP London
Emeritus Clinical Reader in Palliative Medicine, Oxford University

Andrew Wilcock DM Nottm, FRCP London
Macmillan Clinical Reader in Palliative Medicine and Medical Oncology, Nottingham University
Consultant Physician, Hayward House, Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust, City Campus

Claire Stark Toller BM, BCh MA MRCP
Specialist Registrar in Palliative Medicine, Oxford Postgraduate Deanery

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Dehydration  84
Dysphagia  85
Oesophageal stenting  90
Gastro-oesophageal reflux  93
Dyspepsia  96
Gastric stasis  98
Gastric outflow obstruction  100
Nausea and vomiting  101
Bowel obstruction  108
Constipation  111
Faecal impaction  119
Diarrhoea  120
Anal discharge  126
Ascites  127
Guidelines: Management of nausea and vomiting  106
Guidelines: Opioid-induced constipation  117
Guidelines: ‘Blind’ paracentesis of ascites in cancer patients  133

4 Respiratory symptoms  145
Breathlessness  145
Cheyne-Stokes respiration  158
Cough  160
Bronchorrhoea  166
Pleural effusion  167
Lymphangitis carcinomatosa  173
Hiccup  174
Guidelines: Therapeutic thoracocentesis  170

5 Psychological symptoms  183
Responses to loss  184
Family problems  185
Other problems  185
Anger  185
Anxiety  187
Panic disorder  189
Adjustment disorder  193
Depression  194
The withdrawn patient  201
The difficult patient  202
Contents

Insomnia 203
Secondary mental disorders 204
Delirium 207
Guidelines: Management of depression 199

6 Biochemical syndromes 215
Hypercalcaemia 215
Diabetes mellitus 219
Syndrome of inappropriate ADH secretion (SIADH) 225

7 Haematological symptoms 229
Haematological changes in cancer 229
Anaemia of chronic disease 229
Bleeding 232
Surface bleeding 236
Nosebleeds 237
Haemoptysis 237
Haematemesis and melaena 239
Rectal and vaginal haemorrhage 241
Haematuria 241
Severe haemorrhage 243
Venous thrombo-embolism 244
Disseminated intravascular coagulation 250

8 Neurological symptoms 257
Weakness 257
Corticosteroid myopathy 258
Paraneoplastic neurological disorders 259
Lambert-Eaton myasthenic syndrome (LEMS) 262
Spinal cord compression 264
Cramp 273
Spasticity 276
Myoclonus 279
Generalized convulsive seizures 279
Non-convulsive status epilepticus 283
Patulous Eustachian tube 284
Stopping dexamethasone in patients with intracranial malignancy 285
Guidelines: Bowel management in paraplegia and tetraplegia 272
Contents

9 Urinary symptoms 289
  Definitions 289
  Bladder innervation 290
  Frequency and urgency 290
  Bladder spasms 293
  Voiding difficulties 294

10 Oedema in advanced cancer 297
  Oedema 297
  Lymphoedema 298
  Clinical features 298
  Evaluation 299
  Explanation 300
  Management 300
  Management of complications 312
  Fluid drainage 316
  Guidelines: Dry skin in lymphoedema 302
  Guidelines: Pneumatic compression therapy 311
  Guidelines: Cellulitis/acute inflammatory episodes (AIEs) in lymphoedema 314

11 Skin care 321
  Pruritus 321
  Dry skin 329
  Wet skin 330
  Skin care during radiotherapy 331
  Sweating 331
  Stomas 334
  Fistulas 340
  Fungating cancer 342
  Decubitus ulcers 346
  Guidelines: Advice for radiotherapy patients about skin care 332
  Guidelines: Fungating cancer (India) 344

12 Emergencies 357
  Anaphylaxis 358
  Respiratory 360
  Cardiac 368
  Acute renal failure 373
  Acute urinary retention 376
  Hypoglycaemia 378
### Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pain</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatric</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overdose</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance withdrawal</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverse drug reactions</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complications of therapeutic procedures</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13 Last days</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advance planning</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiopulmonary resuscitation</td>
<td>414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity of care</td>
<td>418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withholding and withdrawing life-prolonging medical treatment</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artificial nutrition and hydration</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary refusal of food and fluid</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Give death a chance’</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dying at home</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosing imminent death</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool Care Pathway for the dying patient</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symptom relief</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intolerable suffering</td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palliative sedation</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refractory existential distress</td>
<td>432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When all has been said and done</td>
<td>435</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Index**                                              | 439  |
Symptom Management in Advanced Cancer is the companion volume to the Palliative Care Formulary (PCF). More information about the drugs (or classes of drug) referred to in Symptom Management in Advanced Cancer can be found in the Palliative Care Formulary, 3rd edition (PCF3), and on the website www.palliativedrugs.com.

Symptom Management in Advanced Cancer is written primarily for doctors, but will also be of value to nurses working with cancer patients, particularly in palliative care. It provides a framework of knowledge which will enable both doctors and nurses to develop a scientific and systematic approach to the management of symptoms in advanced cancer.

In palliative care, many drugs are used ‘beyond the licence’ or ‘off label’. For example, few drugs are licensed (labelled) for use by continuous subcutaneous infusion (CSCI) but many are given this way. Because of the costs involved, it is unlikely that this situation will ever be rectified. Unlicensed use is not routinely indicated in Symptom Management in Advanced Cancer. However, details of licensed and unlicensed indications are given in PCF3 (and the Hospice and Palliative Care Formulary USA, 2nd edition), and on www.palliativedrugs.com.

Physicians have a duty in common law to act with reasonable care and skill in a manner consistent with the practice of professional colleagues of similar standing. Thus, when prescribing outside the terms of a licence, doctors must be fully informed about the actions and uses of the drug and be assured of the quality of the particular product.

For this fourth edition of Symptom Management in Advanced Cancer, the authorship has been extended to ensure continuity for the future. All the chapters have been updated, and some extensively revised. Chapter 12, Emergencies, has been much expanded to encompass the list of emergencies in the UK Palliative Medicine Specialty Training Curriculum. Chapter 13, Last days, is entirely new. Inter alia, it discusses the implications for clinicians in England and Wales of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (and reflected in common law in Scotland and Northern Ireland), as well as consideration of other important end-of-life issues such as palliative sedation.

Scattered throughout the book is a series of Guidelines. These provide practitioner-friendly clinical advice, purposely restricted to 1–2 pages to facilitate their use in patient care. For the justification of the opinions expressed in the Guidelines, the reader should refer to the main text and to the articles referenced there.

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Robert Twycross
Andrew Wilcock
Claire Stark Toller
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