Steroid Replacement Education: Impact on Patients and their Carers

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Introduction

Steroid replacement is life-saving in patients with steroid axis deficiency.

Education surrounding steroid replacement is vital in their management.

Methods

We organised ‘Steroid Replacement Education Days’ for patients and their family members/carers to help enhance their knowledge on steroids and intercurrent illness.

Lectures detailed manifestations, causes, management of steroid deficiency and the practical issues surrounding steroid replacement.

This was followed by a practical demonstration of steroid emergency injections by our endocrine specialist nurse team.

Questionnaires were offered to attendees to look at the impact of the course.

Results

The patient questionnaire had 16 questions and there were 33 respondents:

- 51.5% (n=17) reported that they had received prior training on adjusting the dose of steroids during intercurrent illness, with 45.5% (n=15) having undergone adrenal crisis due to untimely adjustment of their steroids.
- 27.2% (n=9) were already fully confident (score rating of 8-10 on a 0-10 scale) in adjusting their steroids; this increased to 81.8% (n=27) after the training day.
- From 6.1% (n=2), 45.5% (n=15) felt fully confident in injecting steroids after the course.
- 94% (n=31) found the practical demonstration by the nurses extremely useful and a similar percentage rated the course excellent (score rating of 8-10 on a 0-10 scale).

The questionnaire given to guests had 12 questions and 24 responded:

- 16.7% (n=4) had been trained on steroids and intercurrent illness prior to the course.
- 12.5% (n=3) felt confident in injecting steroids before; this rose to 88% (n=21) after the practical demonstration, which 87.5% (n=21) rated as excellent.
- 91.0% (n=22) rated the event as excellent.

Conclusions

Educational events organised outside the usual outpatient clinic appointments can have a positive impact on the patients’ and carers’ understanding of emergency situations in relation to their steroid replacement (see the Figure).

More education initiatives are required to ensure safety of patients on life-saving steroid replacement therapy.

Structured Steroid Education Increases Confidence Levels in Dealing with ‘Sick Day Rules’

Responses from Patients

| Adjusting Steroid Dose (Before Course) | 8* | 6 | 19 |
| Adjusting Steroid Dose (After Course) | 3 | 3 | 27 1.4 fold increase |
| Injecting Emergency Steroids (Before Course) | 25 | 6 | 2 |
| Injecting Emergency Steroids (After Course) | 9 | 9 | 15 7.5 fold increase |

Scores on a 0-10 Scale:
- Poor (0-4)
- Average (5-7)
- Good (8-10)

Responses from Carers

| Injecting Emergency Steroids (Before Course) | 13 | 8 | 3 |
| Injecting Emergency Steroids (After Course) | 5 | 7 | 12 4 fold increase |

Scores on a 0-10 Scale:
- Poor (0-4)
- Average (5-7)
- Good (8-10)

* Number of responses (n=)