

Publication

Drug use problems with self-injected low-molecular-weight heparins in primary care

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PURPOSE: Outpatient subcutaneous therapies are becoming increasingly common. A literature search failed to find produced any studies on application problems pertaining to the self-injection of low-molecular-weight heparins (LMWH) in a heterogeneous outpatient population under daily-life conditions. We therefore designed a study with the aim of recording drug use problems, patient satisfaction, compliance, problems arising from the injection site (abdomen vs. thigh), and residual drug volumes in pre-filled syringes used in self-injection therapy. **METHODS:** Patients were recruited in community pharmacies by 95 trained Master's students in pharmacy. Data were collected during recruitment and by means of structured questionnaire-based telephone interviews that were carried out at the beginning and the end of the LMWH treatment. **RESULTS:** The median age of the 213 patients enrolled in the study was 54 years [interquartile range (IQR) 39-70 years]; of these, 15.5% had their injections administered by a third person. The rate of self-reported non-compliance was 17.1%. At least one relevant problem was recorded in 85.0% of the cases. At the end of the treatment, 38.9% of the patients stated self-administration of the injections required some effort. The preferred injection site was the thigh (68.5%). An overall mean residual drug volume 10.0% was detected for 3.9% of the patients. If residual drug was present, a median of 11.2% (IQR 8.6-17.6%) of the total drug volume had not been injected. Patients injecting into the thigh showed a higher risk of leaving residual medication (odds ratio 2.16, 95% confidence interval 1.04-4.51). **CONCLUSIONS:** Most patients had drug use problems, whereas no clear factors were associated with non-compliance, the injection site (apart from residual drug), and discomfort or effort required (apart from prior injection use).

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