

Guidelines For The Management Of Neuropathic Pain

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Neuropathic Pain is defined as pain arising from a lesion or disease of the somatosensory nervous system. (International Association for the Study of Pain). It is a clinical description which requires a demonstrable lesion or disease that satisfies established neurological diagnostic criteria.

It is now regarded as a distinct clinical entity despite a large variety of causes. It has a substantial effect on the quality of life and is associated with a high economic burden both for the individual and society. Epidemiological surveys have shown that many patients do not receive appropriate treatment, hence experts have published guidelines which have been updated from time to time.

A holistic, multi-disciplinary approach to management has been suggested and the principal goals of treatment are to: 1) reduce pain 2) improve physical function 3) reduce psychological distress and 4) improve the overall quality of life.

Diagnosis of neuropathic pain and clinical assessment and evaluation remains the cornerstone in its management. The underlying condition should be treated. Pharmacotherapy is the most common first-line treatment option.

Four drug classes have consistently demonstrated efficacy in randomized clinical trials. These are: 1) Anticonvulsants 2) Antidepressants 3) Opioids 4) Local anaesthetics. This lecture will provide a framework for the use of these drugs while emphasizing the other modalities in its management such as physical and occupational therapy, psychological therapy and interventional therapy when indicated.