KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE SURVEY OF PRESCRIBING OPIOIDS FOR CHRONIC NONCANCER PAIN AMONG PAIN AND NON-PAIN PHYSICIANS IN TAIWAN

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INTRODUCTION / AIM

Prescribing opioids for chronic noncancer pain (CNCP) has been strictly regulated in Taiwan. This study was undertaken to survey physicians’ practice, knowledge, attitude, and hesitation regarding prescribing opioids for CNCP.

METHODS

All 66 specialists who were treating the registered CNCP outpatients in Taiwan Food and Drug Administration were visited and completed an anonymous questionnaire in 2011. The survey was conducted among board-certified anesthesiologists, oncologists, and non-pain physicians at paired hospital levels.

RESULTS

A total of 266 of 355 (75%) questionnaires were received from CNCP physicians (66), anesthesiologists (66), oncologists (66), and non-pain physicians (68). Over 70% of CNCP physicians and anesthesiologists had received CNCP-related training courses, but much fewer oncologists (21%) and non-pain physicians (10%) had received such training. Only 13% of non-pain physicians stated familiarity with the Taiwan narcotic drug regulation and up to 73% would accordingly skip or reduce dosage or duration of opioid prescriptions. In addition, non-pain physicians had significantly lower mean scores of knowledge, attitude and hesitation than did the pain-related physicians (P<0.001). CNCP physicians who had received CNCP-related training courses achieved higher knowledge score than did those not receiving training (P=0.002). Overall, the leading barriers for prescribing opioids were inadequate knowledge of pain management (76%), physician reluctance (73%), patient reluctance (68%), and family reluctance (78%) to opioid use.

DISCUSSION / CONCLUSIONS

There are substantial knowledge gaps and negative attitude toward prescribing long-term opioids for CNCP patients among pain-related and non-pain physicians in Taiwan, suggesting that efforts are needed to improve postgraduate education regarding chronic pain management.

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