

Tip 13 (May 2010)

Importance of blood pressure treatment algorithms and medication titration visits to achieve blood pressure targets

This month's Newsletter-Comment concerns the nurse titration clinics which we are setting up as part of the Waitemata DHB Hypertension service.

The same principles though apply to the (majority of) hypertension patients that GP's manage independently. You are much more likely to achieve blood pressure targets in your patients if you have a drug-treatment algorithm which you are familiar and comfortable with¹. You do not need to adhere to this slavishly, and of course it will need to be modified for the different characteristics and requirements of different patients. You can devise your own algorithm based on one of the blood pressure management guidelines, or you can use my suggested one².

As noted in that presentation, multiple visits may be required to get the patient to target, and these visits should be at approximately fortnightly intervals. The reasons for this interval include (a) The maximal BP-lowering benefit from a new drug, or dose alteration, is usually evident by two weeks (b) Patients started on ACE-inhibitors, ARB's, or diuretics (of having doses of these drugs increased) should have their urea creatinine and electrolytes checked at a fortnight;- a creatinine rise of up to 20% is allowable on ACE-I's and ARB's and in those patients destined to develop significant hypokalaemia or hyponatraemia on thiazides, it is generally present by two weeks (c) Patients will often discontinue new drugs causing significant side effects and a fortnightly follow-up will ensure that their blood pressure does not go untreated for too long.

Up to 12 fortnightly visits may be required to get a patient with stage 2 hypertension to target;- for those of your patients in whom this is logistically difficult, this is a service that will be offered by the Waitemata nurse-led hypertension titration clinics.

1. JNC 7 Guidelines www.nnlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/hypertension/

2. Lecture to Waitemata Physicians' Update 26.11.09. "Applying a Business Principle to Hypertension Management" (click on the link in the "Powerpoint Presentations and Teaching Materials" page of this website)