

Cancer Constipation

Clinical summary of the ONS Guidelines™ for opioid-induced and non-opioid-related cancer constipation

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Constipation is a prevalent and distressing symptom affecting people with cancer. It may be a chronic condition, or it may be caused by the effects of the disease, its treatment, or the side effects of symptom management, including the use of opioids. These evidence-based guidelines can assist clinicians in the decision-making process, guiding patients to effective interventions to decrease the incidence and severity of constipation.

THIS DOCUMENT ACTS AS THE CLINICAL SUMMARY component of the ONS Guidelines™ for the management of opioid-induced and non-opioid-related constipation in adult patients with cancer (Rogers et al., 2020) and the systematic review for the synthesis of evidence on the topic (Ginex et al., 2020). The ONS Guidelines for management of opioid-induced and non-opioid-related cancer constipation have been developed by a panel of oncology healthcare providers after rigorous systematic review of high-quality randomized clinical trials designed to establish the evidence-based efficacy of prevention of and interventions to manage constipation in adults with cancer. Sources of evidence have been divided into pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic interventions (such as acupuncture or lifestyle education). The GRADE (Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development, and Evaluation) approach was used to assess the certainty of the evidence and make the constipation management recommendations presented in this clinical summary.

Guideline Questions and Target Audience

What is the evidence regarding lifestyle, pharmacologic, and nonpharmacologic approaches that can be used to manage opioid-induced and non-opioid-related constipation? Where are the gaps in the evidence regarding constipation in cancer care? This guideline is intended for a target audience of clinicians caring for patients with cancer who experience constipation, as well as policymakers, patients, and caregivers.

How the Guideline Was Developed

This guideline was developed by an interprofessional panel of healthcare providers, including a gastroenterologist, a dietitian, nurses, a methods expert, and patient representation. The panel prioritized clinical questions related to the management of constipation in patients with cancer and patient-important outcomes identified as critical for decision making. A systematic review and meta-analysis of the literature was conducted to inform the clinical questions. The GRADE approach was used to assess the certainty of the evidence and provide a foundation for recommendations (Guyatt et al., 2011).

KEYWORDS

constipation; opioid-induced constipation; acupuncture; evidence-based guidelines

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