Introduction

• Aneurysmal SAH is a life threatening condition that requires complex medical decision making by a multidisciplinary team in the neuro ICU setting
• The post-operative management of headache pain following aSAH has been relatively unchanged and ineffective in the previous decade, with heavy reliance on opioid analgesics
• A better understanding of headache pain management practices and efficacy is the first step toward proposing a pain management strategy that reduces reliance on opioids

Methods

Study type: Single center retrospective review

Inclusion criteria: (1) Patients with aneurysmal SAH >18 y/o with Hunt & Hess grade 3 or less, (2) Patients admitted between 2012-2019, (3) Able to verbally provide pain level during hospitalization with documented medication given

Patient information (i.e. demographics, medications, radiographic findings, pain reports, lab values, etc.) was systematically input into a RedCap database. Statistical analysis was performed by a biostatistician. All patients analyzed (n=71) received care at a single tertiary care center (Shands)

Results

• Opioid prescription for headache pain following aSAH has remained consistent since 2012, despite changing legislation
• There has been a shift towards increased use of gabapentin for headache prophylaxis and treatment
• Common non-opioid analgesic agents (ibuprofen, fioricet, acetaminophen) have been consistently prescribed since 2012
• Opioid prescription is relatively constant throughout admission following aSAH, mirroring mean headache severity

Conclusion

• Headache is a serious but poorly understood component of aSAH
• Treatment strategy has been heavily driven toward opiates
• With changing understanding of opioids, alternative strategies for pain control are imperative
• Multi-modality treatments may offer an important avenue for improving patient outcome and satisfaction
• Anti-epileptic medications may be a potential alternative to opioid therapy due to the potential role of cortical spreading depolarizations in headache generation

References


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