

### Pain management of children and adolescents with sickle cell disease presenting to the emergency department

To the Editor

I have 3 comments on the interesting study by Taha and Rehmani<sup>1</sup> on the pain management of children and adolescents with sickle cell disease presenting to the emergency department.

First, there are 3 main barriers to the effective pain management in sicklers: the manifestation of vaso-occlusive pain; the socio-cultural factors affecting pain assessment; and the concerns regarding addiction and pseudo-addiction. Addressing these barriers will allow people with sickle cell disease (SCD) to have their pain managed more effectively, improve their quality of life, and potentially reduce emergency departments' attendances, and admissions to hospital.<sup>2</sup>

Second, Taha and Rehmani<sup>1</sup> stated that the average pain score in the studied sicklers was 5.9, which is considered as moderate pain. Narcotic analgesics are the drugs of choice for the treatment of moderate to severe pain in many serious illnesses, including sickle cell anemia. However, they were under-utilized (34.6%) compared to non-steroidal anti-inflammatory analgesics (42%). Three factors might contribute to narcotic analgesics under-utilization: 1. Pain scoring might be biased, as the studied sicklers probably received home analgesic remedies prior to arrival to the emergency departments. 2. Increasing concerns among some treating physicians on the potential risk of narcotics addiction. 3. Misbelief among some treating physicians that these drugs could promote the development of acute chest syndrome, though this association has not yet been proven.<sup>3</sup>

Third, there is a continuous need for implementing educational programs regarding SCD, the pharmacology of various pain medications, risk of addiction, and the assessment and treatment of pain.

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#### Reply from the Author

With regard to the correspondence from Prof. Al-Mendalawi, I have no comments on this matter.

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#### References

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#### Related topics

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