



PRURITUS

SKIN LESIONS, SKIN CARE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PRURITUS IN PATIENTS WITH UREMIA UNDERGOING HEMODIALYSIS

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Introduction: Pruritus is a characteristic of chronic kidney disease, especially in patients undergoing hemodialysis. Few data on the characteristics and burden of pruritus have been published.

Objective: The current survey explored the prevalence, severity and resulting burden of pruritus and skin lesions in patients with uremia.

Methods: Cross-sectional, nationwide survey in dialysis centers based on structured patient and physician questionnaires.

Results: N=302 were included (56.5 % male, mean age 66.0 ± 14.4 years, mean duration of dialysis 3.9 ± 4.8 years). Skin lesions appeared since start of dialysis in 50 % of patients, with xerosis (94.7 %) and desquamation (25.8 %) being the most frequent and disturbing findings. Pruritus was reported by 60.9 % of patients undergoing dialysis with a current mean Numerical Rating Scale of 5.1 ± 2.4 occurring most frequently in the back, legs and arms. In 19.7 % the pruritus was chronic (> 6 weeks duration), including 78.7 % persisting for more than six months. 61.0 % of patients suffered from pruritus starting with hemodialysis, including 51.2 % with persisting pruritus and 9.7 % with temporary pruritus. Remarkably, 74.7 % of patients reported pruritus independently of dialysis whereas 6.8 % only experienced pruritus during dialysis procedure, 17.3 % after dialysis and 1.2 % before dialysis. About 89 % of patients with xerosis and 69 % with desquamation reported self-medication. However, only 40 % and 28 % sought medical help respectively, indicating a remarkable lack of health care.

Conclusion: The findings suggest a more intensive focus on the skin symptoms and signs related to uremia in the patients with dialysis. Further research should be conducted focusing on recognizing subgroups of patients of particular vulnerability to pruritus and skin lesions which may facilitate identifying patients at risk in an early moment.

