

Myeloma

An Anecdote

DOLLY BHASKARAN

Multiple Myeloma (MM) is a neoplasm of mature and immature plasma cells. Multiple myeloma is an incurable disease for nearly all patients. Current chemotherapy and supportive care can result in significant disease control and improved duration of survival and quality of life. The treatment in multiple myeloma is a multidisciplinary approach and the professional Nurses have a major role to play in educating the patient regarding the newer approaches to treatment.

Mrs. Lily Brown (pseudonym), an independent 60 year old lady was admitted to my ward. On admission she was very unwell and unable to walk. She was completely dependant on Nurses to carry out her daily activities of living. Amongst her most prominent complaints were weight loss, generalised weakness, lumbar back pain and depression. Lily also complained of spontaneous bruising over her body.

Routine Results

The routine investigation results were very suggestive of multiple myeloma. Her bone marrow aspirate revealed an extremely heavy infiltrate of abnormal plasma cells. Her skeletal survey demonstrated collapse of thoracic and lumbar spines, together with large lytic lesions in the shaft of the right humerus. Her chest X-ray demonstrated left-sided collapse of lung.

During admission she told the Nurse that she feared that she suffered from Cancer because one of her friends had the same problems and she died of cancer. She also requested not to inform the family about her illness until it was discussed with her. Whereas the family told the Nurses not to tell her about the disease and its prognosis. It created a lot of ethical

dilemma among Nurses. Considering her autonomy in decision making, the Nurses decided to tell the truth and discuss it with Lily prior to taking any actions. However, Lily and her family were very co-operative during her stay in the hospital which helped the Nurses to provide the care effectively.

In Lily's case the initial management consisted of analgesics and antibiotics, intravenous hydration, and regular aperients. Specific measures were taken to relieve high calcium level in blood prior to active treatment.

In view of IgA Kappa Multiple myeloma she was commenced on chemotherapy and radiotherapy. The Nurses have an important role in administering the chemotherapy. The treatment regimen was explained and ensured that Lily understood the regimen and side effects of these intensive treatments. According to Lily's wish the family was included in the care and was warned about the side effects of chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

Body Image

Lily's body image was given prime importance. She did not want to lose her hair and was worried about the body image. The explanation and reassurance from the Nurses helped her to opt for a wig. Lily was referred to the surgical appliances department for a wig according to her choice. As Lily was in one of the side rooms there was no problem to maintain the privacy.

All precautions were taken while administering the chemotherapy for the safe administration and to prevent the spillage. The Nurse checked the intravenous site for any complications such as extravasation. All medicines were administered on time.

Personal hygiene was given ut-

most importance to prevent infections. Oral hygiene was given importance especially to prevent mucositis and she was instructed to take four hourly mouth wash.

Lily was transfused a total of four units of blood. It was the role of the Nurse to explain to Lily why it was necessary and allow to ask her questions. Lily expressed a fear of having the transfusion as she had heard a lot in the media about Hepatitis C and AIDS lately. The Nurse explained that all bloods are thoroughly screened and the likelihood of any disease getting through was remote.

Correction of dehydration and the maintenance of fluid electrolyte balance was of prime importance for the prevention and early detection of renal failure in myeloma patients. Daily urinalysis was done to check for any protein or glucose in the urine. The bone pain is one of the major problems in these patients. Administration of analgesics at the correct time, and reassuring the patient was very important to enhance comfort and to relieve anxiety.

Altered comfort can give rise to a number of problems which could be prevented by the use of simple Nursing measures like comfortable position in bed, support by pillows, maintenance of good posture, warm drinks, good interpersonal relationships, etc. The Nurse would be able to teach and give advice on complementary therapies such as massage, relaxation, meditation, and also to counsel according to the patient's choice. To me, the most important role of the Nurse includes understanding the patients according to their perception of illness and acting appropriately.

The Nurse has an integral part to play in treatment and care of myeloma

BRANCH AFFAIRS

patients. Nursing assessment and intervention is very important in the early detection and prevention of complications in the management of myeloma. Involving the patient to compile the care plan was found very useful to provide appropriate care.

She was reviewed in our haematology day ward and received further courses of treatment until she reached a plateau phase. After the treatment she became pain free, mobile, and independent and was discharged from the hospital.

Although the treatment does not eradicate myeloma, it can often suppress disease activity for many years and result in meaningful prolongation of life and relief of symptoms.

To conclude I could say that good quality Nursing care can have an influence on disease control and improved duration of survival and quality of life among myeloma patients.

References

- Firkin F., Chesterman C., Penington D., Rush B., 1989, *de Gruchy's Clinical Haematology in Medical Practice*, Fifth edition, Blackwell Scientific Publications, London.
- Gautier M, Cohen HJ; 1994, 'Multiple Myeloma in the Elderly,' *J-Am-Geriatr-Soc.*, 42(6), 653-654.
- Hoffbrand AV, Petit JE, 1993, *Essential Haematology*, Third edition, Blackwell Scientific Publications, London.
- Hughes-Jones N.C., Wickramasinghe S.N. 1991, *Lecture Notes on Haematology*, Fifth edition, Blackwell Scientific Publications, London.
- Kyle RA, 1993, 'Newer Approaches to the Management of Multiple Myeloma,' *Cancer Supplement*, Vol. 72, No. 11, 3489-3493.
- MacLennan ICM, Drayson M, Dunn J, 1994, 'Multiple Myeloma,' *BMJ*, Vol. 308, 1033-1036.

ANDHRA PRADESH

Annual Conference

The Annual Conference of A.P. Branch of TNAI was held at Tirupati in S.V.R.R.G.G. Hospital, Clinical Lecture Gallery, during August 21 to 23, 1997. The theme was : 'Quality Assurance: Nurses' Concern and Nursing Practice'.

We had the Inaugural function on August 21. Mr. Gopal Krishna Reddy, Minister for Minor Irrigation, Govt. of A.P., was the Chief Guest. Dr. Ramana Rao, Superintendent, S.V.R.R.G.G. Hospital, Tirupati, presided over the function. Dr. G. Krishna Kumar, Principal, S.V. Medical College, and Additional Director, released the Souvenir. Dr. Suraya Prakash Rao, Director, SVIMS, inaugurated the Scientific Exhibition. Dr. Subramanyam, Cardiologist, Deputy Superintendent, S.V.R.R.G. G. Hospital, in his message pleaded for promotion of the noble cause of Nurses and for creating an independent Nursing Directorate in the State which is a longfelt need.

Mr. Gopal Krishna Reddy, in his Inaugural Address, had all praise and appreciation for the Nurses for unstinted and round-the-clock service to patients irrespective of rich and poor, literate and illiterate and unmindful of caste, colour, social status and religion. He agreed with the demand for a separate Nursing Directorate and promised to use his good offices to establish the same in the near future.

Dr. Ramana Rao, in his Presidential Address, was apologetic for the not-so-hygienic condition of the patients' environment, due to various

restraints. He also supported the demand for recognition and awards for Nurses.

Ms. B.E. Hema Nalini, President, A.P. Branch, TNAI, in her Presidential Remarks dwelt at length on the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the country's Independence. Nurses have the potential for carrying out independent Nursing functions in the Hospital and in the Community, she said. "Nurses can effectively function in a variety of settings. Women in general are a neglected lot in the society. Also, the Nursing community is facing the same situation," she pointed out. She posed a few relevant questions that are faced by the Nurses in the present day : Is there independence in practising Nursing? Is there a separate budget for Nursing? How much of natural and social justice is done for Nurses?

Perhaps the missing ingredient for Nurses is Autonomy, she said. She also requested the Nurses to unitedly follow the Gandhian way to resolve many of the current burning issues of the Nurses.

Mrs. Suguna, Vice President of the State Branch, unfolded the theme : "Quality Assurance: Nurses' Concern and Nursing Practice". The Secretary of the State Branch Sr. Prakashamma read a few messages received from Mr. Dilip Kumar Nursing Advisor, Govt. of India, Mrs. S.A. Samuel, President, TNAI, Ms. J.P. Dhaulta, Secretary-General, TNAI, and Ms. Molly David, Assistant Secretary-cum-SNA Adviser, TNAI.

Vote of thanks was proposed by Mrs. Vedavathy, Nursing Tutor, Grade I, School of Nursing, S.V.R.R.G.G. Hospital.