Oral cytotoxic medicines

cytotoxic medicines have a narrow therapeutic index and monitoring the patient for safety and efficacy is essential. Written and verbal communication with patients and carers is critical for the safe and appropriate use of cytotoxic therapy.

If a patient unknown to the prescriber, pharmacist or healthcare professional presents for oral cytotoxic therapy, the risk of continuing therapy should be balanced against the risk of stopping therapy until a full history and safety checks are done. In many cases delaying therapy for a short time while a full patient review is conducted and laboratory counts are obtained is safer than continuing therapy.

Dr Carrington served on advisory boards for Amgen and Merck Sharp & Dohme and has received honoraria from Roche and Merck Sharp & Dohme for educational presentations.

REFERENCES


FURTHER READING


Dental note

Safe use of oral cytotoxic drugs

The increasing use of oral cytotoxic drugs for non-oncological diseases has resulted in an increased likelihood that dental patients will be taking them. The oral mucosa has a very high cell turnover rate and these drugs will invariably result in thinning of the mucosa, and often, concurrent salivary hypofunction.

These patients are likely to require increased care and, if they have complex dental treatment needs, may require specialist management. Good communication with the treating doctors and appropriate referral where necessary will significantly help these patients.

Michael McCullough
Chair
Therapeutics Committee
Australian Dental Association