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Title: How Opioid's can affect the falls risk status of Head and Neck Cancer patients on Radiotherapy.

Body: Background:

'Cancer and its treatments potentiate important risk factors for falls' (Morris & Lewis 2020). Since establishing the Head and Neck Radiotherapy service, it has become apparent that this cohort is at an increased risk of falls due to opioid use in the management of radiotherapy related pain.

Method:

A retrospective 6-month review of opioid related falls risk amongst the Head and Neck cancer patients on radiotherapy. An initial falls risk assessment was carried out by the Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) to establish a baseline score and identify pre-existing risk factors including any opioid medications. A weekly CNS evaluation is then completed to assess for new contributing factors specifically related to the addition or dose increase of these medications.

Results:

Of the 22 patients that have completed radiotherapy, 15 were deemed to be at an increased risk of falls by the end of their treatment, 12 of which were related to the addition of opioids. See graph below.

Conclusion:

In response to increased radiotherapy related pain, the introduction of opioid medications was seen to directly influence a patient's falls risk status. Through baseline assessments and weekly CNS reviews, potential falls risks and safety needs can be identified for this group of patients ensuring successful completion of treatment.

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