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Gabapentinoids: Safety Considerations and Downstream Outcomes

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Dr. Liossatou:
This is the CE with GLC, and I'm Dr. Anastasia Liossatou. Here with me today is Dr. Federico Alberici. And in this episode, we will address the use of gabapentinoids for CKD-associated pruritus.

Federico, let's begin with an overview. How effective are gabapentinoids, and are there any downsides we should keep in mind?

Dr. Alberici:
We know that CKD-associated pruritus is a chronic condition, is a bothersome condition for our patients with a significant impact on quality of life, sleep, impacting significantly access on healthcare resources, and potentially with an impact on mortality. It is therefore key to have several therapeutic options that may help us out in managing our patients.

The rationale behind the use of gabapentinoids is that there's a neuropathic component within the possible pathogenic hits in inducing CKD-associated pruritus. So there's a strong rationale for using gabapentinoids, although the studies available are relatively weak. We do have some randomized controlled trials. We do have some real-life observational studies. Overall, those studies, assessed also through a meta-analysis, have shown effectiveness for gabapentinoid in controlling CKD-aP. This usually happens within the first weeks of treatment.

However, we should be aware that this class of drug may be not easy to manage. There are common side effects associated with the use of gabapentinoids, such as dizziness, somnolence, drowsiness, confusion, visual disturbances, and falls. And those are particularly relevant for patients with CKD, where the drugs may accumulate, causing troubles for our patients.

Moreover, recently some more problems, some more side effects have been reported for gabapentinoids, such as an increased risk of respiratory depression, especially in patients that are treated with other drugs that may reduce the central nervous system, that may depress the central nervous system. It is therefore key, when we decide to employ such approaches for patients with CKD-aP, to be aware that those side effects may happen, that we need to start on this drug at low doses and up-titrate them and hopefully monitor closely our patients.

Dr. Liossatou:
So ultimately, what it matters for us as healthcare professionals is that safe and effective care is not only choosing the right treatment,

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but also, it's about recognizing when a treatment may be causing side effects or harm. So by increasing awareness of dependence, withdrawal, tolerance, and other adverse effects, we can deliver more person-centric care and improve outcomes for our patients.

So that's our time. Thanks for tuning in. Thank you.

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