

Week 2 Discussion: Safety Precautions with Chemotherapeutics

Discuss safety precautions you would include when teaching patients about chemotherapeutic drugs.

Hello Everyone,

Chemotherapeutics drugs are cytotoxic drugs that are used therapeutically to kill or inhibit the growth and division of the cancer cells. As many of these agents have a very low therapeutic index, there is a very narrow window to determine what is therapeutic and what is toxic (Chamberlain College of Nursing, n.d.). So, these drugs have severe side effects and need extra safety consideration and precautions during the therapy. To comprehend the safety precautions, one must understand the goal of treatment that is to cure, control, and relieve the symptoms caused by a tumor. Also, understanding the pharmacokinetics, the pharmacodynamics of each chemotherapeutic agent is important to provide effective teaching to patients.

As a nurse, it is important to assess your client on what type of signs and symptoms they are having. With most of the antineoplastic agents, GI upset; nausea, and vomiting are very common. Patients can be taught about Antiemetic drugs like Ondansetron to lessen the symptoms of nausea and vomiting.

Patients should be informed to get blood tests done before the scheduled chemo treatments and after the treatment. A complete CBC is required as bone marrow suppression; anemia, leukopenia, and thrombocytopenia is another common side effect of chemotherapeutic drugs. Patients should be educated to report if signs like a fever over (>101 F), congestion, cough, rashes, stomatitis, easily bruised skin, longer bleeding time, and infections on cuts, fatigue, and weakness are seen. Teach patient to avoid crowds and put mask before meeting people. Suggest patient to avoid fresh flowers and avoid eating raw uncooked foods. Education patient on no bearing down; using stool softener if needed for constipation, using a soft toothbrush, and no use of a rectal thermometer. Patients should be prevented from fall risk. Personal hygiene and maintaining a clean and hygienic environment should be emphasized to patients and family members.