Oral benzydamine (Difflam™) spray as an adjunct for pain management in paediatric patients following tonsillectomy and adenotonsillectomy

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Introduction

The withdrawal of codeine for post-operative analgesia in children undergoing tonsillectomy has led to a pain management quandary. Our objectives were to examine the effectiveness of the addition of regular benzydamine spray (Difflam™) to our normal post-operative regime of regular paracetamol and ibuprofen with as required oral morphine for breakthrough pain in children undergoing tonsillectomy and adenotonsillectomy.

Methods

50 consecutive children were managed using our standard practice. 50 further consecutive children were provided with additional Difflam. We measured post-operative pain and use of Difflam in the week following surgery using validated pain scoring questionnaires.

Results

One-third of children in the younger age group did not tolerate benzydamine, compared to only 12% of those aged six years and older (p=0.0006). The majority of the older children reported analgesic benefit from benzydamine (85%), compared to under half of the younger children (45%), p=0.0001. Of the older group, the requirement for oral morphine was reduced significantly from 83% to 70%, p=0.045.

Conclusion

Difflam spray is poorly tolerated by children aged less than 6 years. When tolerated, Difflam may confer an opiate-sparing effect, but it does not appear to alter the pain profile following tonsil surgery.

Table 1

	Phase 1 (n=50)	Phase 2 with benzydamine (n=50)
Mean age (years)	6.42	6.85
Median age (standard deviation)	5 (2.9)	6 (2.85)
Coblation extracapsular tonsillectomy (n)	28	29
Cold steel tonsillectomy (n)	19	21
Operation technique unrecorded (n)	3	0
Total patients (n)	50	50

Table 2

	Phase 1		Phase 2 (with benzydamine)	
	Age <6 (n=27)	Age >=6 (n=23)	Age <6 (n=24)	Age >=6 (n=26)
Mean age (years)	4.0	9.3	3.6	9.8
Mean pain score - day 4	6.1	6.8	5.2	5.8
Mean pain score - day 7	3.8	3.7	3	2.9
Required morphine	74%	83%	63%	70%
Benzydamine refused/ not tolerated			33%	12%
Found benzydamine useful			42%	85%

Table 3.

	Phase 1	Phase 2 with benzydamine	
	(n=50)	benzydamine perceived not useful (n=18)	benzydamin e perceived useful (n=32)
Mean age (years)	6.6	5.2	7.8
Mean pain score - day 4	6.4	5.4	5.6
Mean pain score - day 7	3.7	5.4	2.7
Required oral morphine	78%	78%	58%