NEONATAL PALLIATIVE CARE: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Palliative care for babies, children and young people with life-limiting conditions is an active and total approach to care, from the point of diagnosis or recognition, throughout the child’s life, death and beyond. It embraces physical, emotional, social and spiritual elements and focuses on the enhancement of quality of life for the child/young person and support for the family. It includes the management of distressing symptoms, provision of short breaks and care through death and bereavement.

Together for short lives has produced a well-established categorisation of conditions outlined below which can be helpful in identifying babies who would benefit from a palliative care approach.



The Principles of care are outlined below:

1. Ability to respond quickly
2. Bereavement support for families
3. Best interests and decision making about treatment options
4. Communication
5. Parallel planning
6. Diversity and cultural factors

More details and helpful guidance and information can be found in the published documents – in particular the Perinatal Pathway for Babies with Palliative Care Needs produced by Together for Short Lives.

**Communication**

When sharing significant news the following points should be considered:

**Advanced Care Plans (PAC-Plan)**

An advanced care plan is a document which can be used to structure a conversation around plans for end of life care. It is a way of documenting the most appropriate care to be given in an emergency or deteriorating situation, agreed by the parents and the clinicians. This is not a legally binding document but it is strongly encouraged that professionals respect the wishes of the family as documented. This document can be altered at any time with the agreement of the family.

The All Wales Paediatric Care Plan is available within this chapter and is available online at :

http://advancecareplan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/All-Wales-PAC-Plan.pdf

A similar process can be considered when counselling a family antenatally – the following box details other information that is required for this unique situation.

**Symptom control**

One of the most challenging parts of palliative care in the neonatal period can be symptom management. The APPM Formulary (v2017) gives excellent guidance in terms of indications and doses. Our colleagues in Paediatric Palliative Medicine are happy to advise us in person or by telephone if required.

For the most commonly used PRN medicines and infusions doses for end of life care please see the basic neonatal medication list within this package.