

'I can't remember'

Patients' views of receiving pain management from paramedics for suspected hip fracture

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Background

Up to 40% of patients with suspected hip fracture report inadequate or no pre-hospital pain management. Fascia Iliaca Compartment Block (FICB) is a pain relief injection straight into the hip. It is used in Emergency Department and orthopaedic wards to manage pain. The RAPID trial tested feasibility of paramedics administering FICB to patients with suspected hip fracture before being taken to hospital.

Aim of the research

We explored patients' experiences of care for suspected hip fracture:

- 1) To assess whether patients could consent to FICB
- 2) To gather views on receiving FICB before ambulance transport to hospital

Methods

We interviewed six patients and the daughter of a patient who received FICB to manage their suspected hip fracture. Interviews, by telephone or face-to-face, were audio-recorded with consent. We conducted thematic analysis of transcripts. Two researchers, one paramedic and one lay member were in the analysis team.



Discussion

Hip fracture patients' overwhelming memory of injury and treatment was of pain. Their priority was to receive pain relief. The quality of care, reassurance and administration of pain management was more important to patients than the mechanism of delivering the intervention.

Results

Respondents' memory of prehospital care was dominated by their experience of extreme pain.

'I have never had pain like it in my life. I couldn't move a finger, I couldn't move my toe, nothing, and I was by the side of the bed like that [stretched out].'

Respondents had only partial memory of care prior to hip surgery. Although they recalled paramedics' arrival, which they reported was up to six hours after their injury, respondents said they remembered little else. Just one recalled consenting to receiving FICB and could describe the process. Other respondents said they were in too much pain to comprehend what occurred or respond coherently.

'I can't really remember exactly what was happening because I was in so much pain. I think somebody gave me something to ease the pain...whatever they did for me, it eased that terrific pain.'

They explained their priority was to receive pain management and they expected the paramedics to treat them safely and effectively.

'I think he asked me if I would go into this scheme and I have a feeling that they asked me that and I know I said yes to something. And he gave me an injection and that was fine. I don't even remember going into the hospital.'

Respondents appeared to be a stoical and trusting group who accepted the treatment they were offered.

'I was brought up from the age of seven up till eighteen that you did not make a complaint. If you were ill, you didn't complain, you just, whatever it was wrong with you, you took it on the chin and that was still my attitude....I don't like to make a fuss.'

They did recall high quality of care and praised paramedics for their reassuring and calm manner.

'They were lovely to me. They chucked the fright out of me because they were talking to me and all that. And my daughter was sitting there with me as well.'

'They explained everything – the situation and the reason why, you know, did I want to try this and all this. I was glad to see them come in. It was perfect. I couldn't wish for better.'