

The Marie Curie
Palliative Care Institute

LIVERPOOL

Liverpool Care Pathway for the Dying Patient (LCP)

National LCP Renal Steering
Group

Guidelines for LCP Drug
Prescribing in Advanced Chronic
Kidney Disease
(*estimated glomerular filtration
rate < 30 ml/min*)

June 2008

ENDORSED BY:



The Renal Association
founded 1950



DH INFORMATION READER BOX

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Contact Details	Jane Heaton Renal and Vascular Policy Manager Department of Health Room 403 Wellington House 133-155 Waterloo Road London SE1 8UG tel: 020 7972 1047 www.dh.gov.uk/renal
For Recipient's Use	

Foreword

Recent advances in the treatment of renal failure have meant that many patients are now surviving for longer, and with increased quality of life, due to renal replacement therapies and kidney transplants. Over 50% of the best-matched kidney transplants are still functioning after twenty-five years and some patients can survive for over twenty years on dialysis. But for those patients in whom such interventions are not appropriate or no longer effective, the shift to palliative care should be encouraged to maintain a good quality of life in dying patients

In 2005 a National LCP Renal Steering Group was developed and utilised an action research approach that has been used to facilitate the transferability of the LCP for use in these more specialist renal areas. This excellent programme included the design of patient and carers information, professional guidance and this innovative and much needed drug guidance for patients with advanced and chronic kidney disease in the last days of life.

This guidance will be welcomed by all specialists and generalists working to ensure models of best practice in the last days of life. The authors have provided clear guidance and advice on medicines management and the control of distressing symptoms. It will enable the service to respond to and respect the wishes of patients and their carers.

All patients with advanced chronic kidney disease deserve optimum care in the last days of life. I believe the LCP and this associated guidance provides us with a significant step towards providing a model of excellence.



Dr Donal O'Donoghue
National Clinical Director for Kidney Care, Department of Health

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Introduction

It is recognised that most patients with kidney disease do not die directly from kidney failure, but from other medical problems. However renal impairment, even if not the primary problem, is an important consideration when considering prescribing drugs in these patients. This is particularly the case for opioids, as metabolites can and do accumulate in renal impairment and may lead to significant toxicity if this is not recognised. These guidelines are designed to optimise the risk/benefit ratio of these drugs. However, it is important to be aware that the risks of toxicity and side effects increase cumulatively as GFR falls. These guidelines are aimed at controlling symptoms once it is recognised that the patient is dying and in the last few days of life. Usually at this stage, the patient will require medication to be given by the subcutaneous route.

Prescribing in Advanced Chronic Kidney Disease

The evidence for symptom control in the dying patient is limited and therefore all of the guidelines are based on level 3 and 4 evidence and expert opinion (**DoH 2005**).

In general, most medications are not excreted well in advanced Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD). It is therefore important to choose medication least likely to accumulate and cause adverse effects. Drug doses may require reduction and dosing intervals may need to be increased to reduce drug toxicity.

Once administered, a drug may have a longer duration of effect than expected and therefore PRN or regular doses of drugs may need to be given less often.

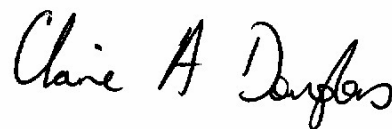
With regard to management of pain and dyspnoea, the evidence for the use of opioids in renal failure is limited. However, these guidelines aim to provide symptom control safely and without development of opioid toxicity. It is very important to titrate the medication carefully and frequently review the patient as considerable variation between patients can exist.

These guidelines were produced by the National LCP Renal Steering Group based on level 3 and 4 evidence and expert opinion. If you would like to refer to this in your clinical practice may we suggest that you liaise with your local drugs & therapeutics – pharmacy policy & procedure, which will determine safe practice & prescribing protocols within your clinical area

We also suggest that liaison between the Hospital Specialist Palliative Care Team, End of Life Care Leads & Conservative Management Renal Leads is key in caring for patients with advanced CKD in the last hours & days of life.

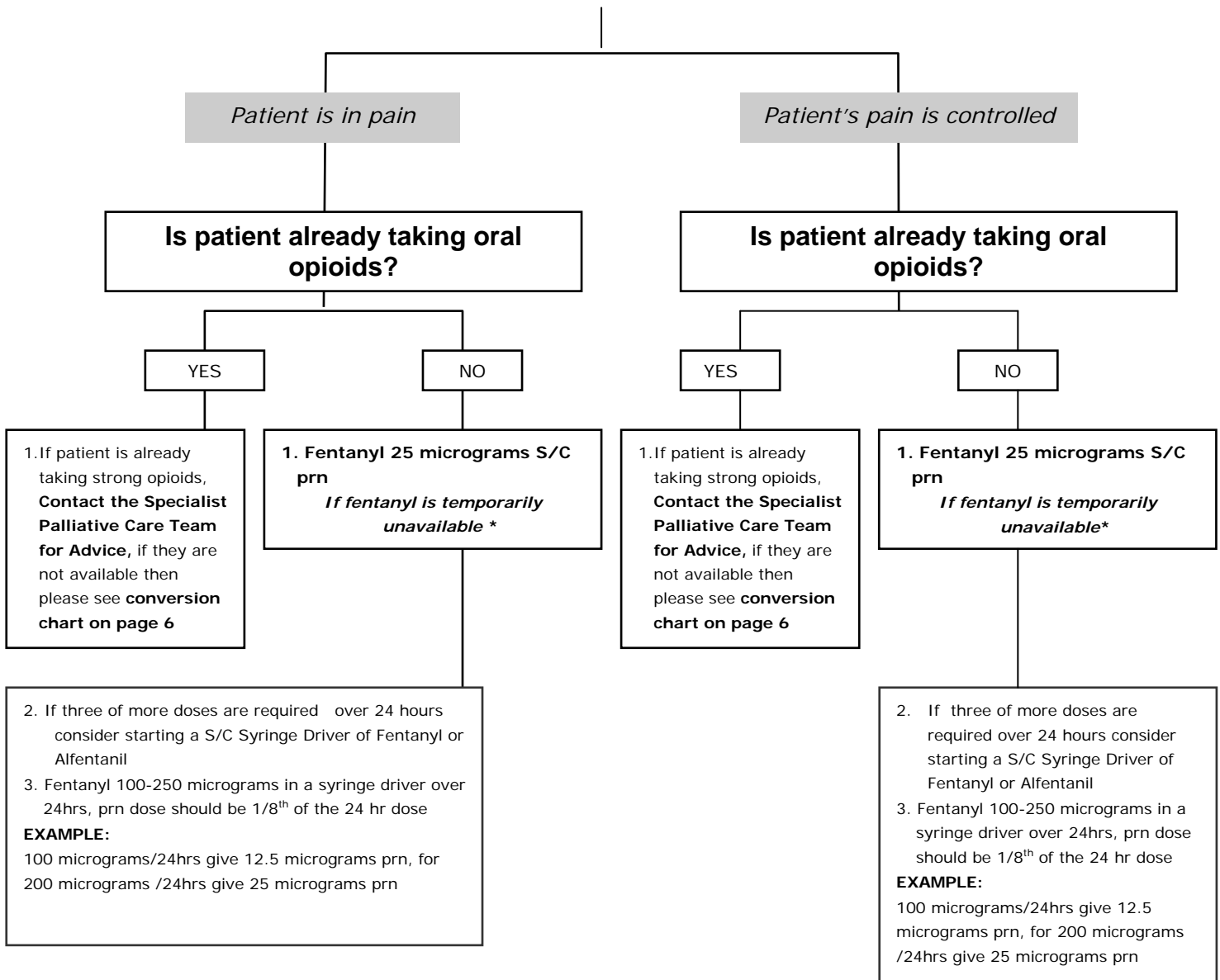


Professor John Ellershaw
Director – Marie Curie Palliative Care
Institute Liverpool
National Clinical Lead Palliative Care – (Specialist)



Dr Claire Douglas
SpR in Palliative Medicine
Chair – Expert Consensus Group

Pain



SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

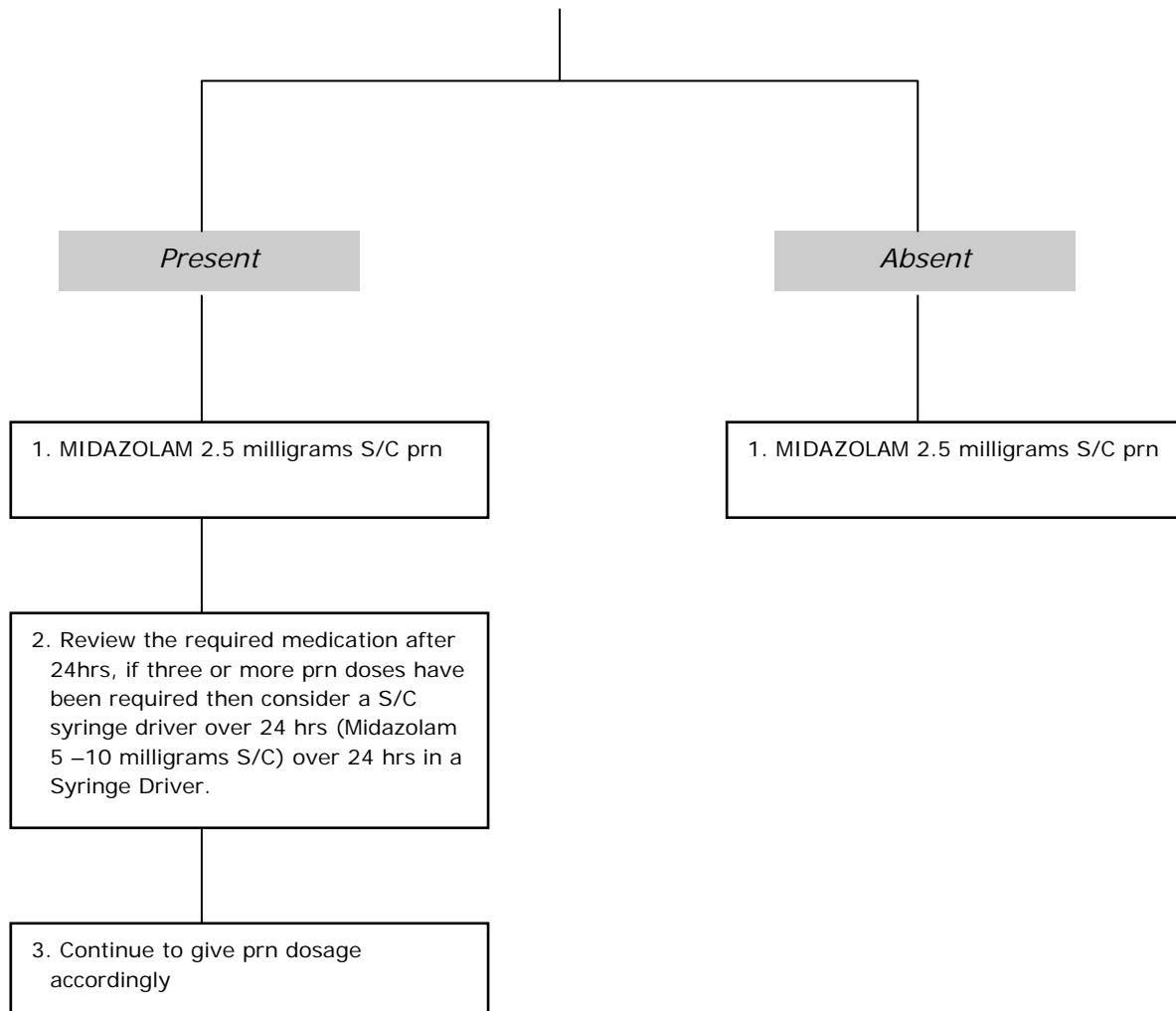
- To convert from other strong opioids contact Specialist Palliative Care Team / Pharmacy for further advice & support as needed
- * If Fentanyl is temporarily unavailable give:
 - Oxycodone 1-2 milligrams S/C prn
 - or**
 - Morphine 1.25 – 2.5 milligrams S/C PRN
- Many of the opioid analgesics and their metabolites may accumulate in Renal Failure causing toxicity with myoclonic jerks, profound narcosis and respiratory depression. Morphine and its metabolites are most likely to cause toxicity. Fentanyl and Alfentanil are less likely to cause these problems, as the metabolites are not active. The duration of effect from Morphine and Oxycodone may last longer than in a patient with normal renal function. (See conversion table on Page 6)
- If Fentanyl dose exceeds 500 micrograms in a Syringe Driver seek expert advice for conversion to Alfentanil
- **If symptoms persist contact the Specialist Palliative Care Team**
- Anticipatory prescribing in this manner will ensure that in the last hours / days of life there is no delay responding to a symptom if it occurs
- **The LCP National Renal Steering Group produced these guidelines according to best practice and evidence base**

OPIOID CONVERSION TABLE

Opioid equivalent doses (Note: There is no exact equivalence between opioids therefore starting low and titrating upwards is recommended safe practice)

Approximately equivalent opioid doses for PRN ('as required') use					
ORAL MORPHINE	DIAMORPHINE INJECTION	MORPHINE INJECTION	FENTANYL INJECTION	ALFENTANIL INJECTION	OXYCODONE INJECTION
4 milligrams orally	1.25 milligrams subcutaneously	2 milligrams subcutaneously	25 micrograms subcutaneously	125 micrograms subcutaneously	1 milligram subcutaneously
8 milligrams orally	2.5 milligrams subcutaneously	4 milligrams subcutaneously	50 micrograms subcutaneously	250 micrograms subcutaneously	2 milligrams subcutaneously
				Note: alfentanil is not ideal for prn use since it has a very short half life, and doses may only last 1-2 hours	
Note: Do not use these equivalent doses for larger doses without specialist palliative advice, as the small numbers entailed have been rounded up.					
Approximately equivalent opioid doses for starting doses in continuous subcutaneous infusions					
(Starting doses should be based on prior opioid requirements, and titrated upwards according to the amount of subsequent PRN doses required in addition to the continuous infusion – there is no upper limit provided the pain is responding well to the opioid, and there are no symptoms or signs of adverse effects or toxicity. Most patients with renal failure require only low doses – if the dose is escalating, advice should be sought from the Palliative Care team)					
	DIAMORPHINE INJECTION	MORPHINE INJECTION	FENTANYL INJECTION	ALFENTANIL INJECTION	OXYCODONE INJECTION
	5 - 10 milligrams Do not use diamorphine in continuous infusion because of the high risk of accumulation and adverse effects	8 - 16 milligrams Do not use morphine in continuous infusion because of the high risk of accumulation and adverse effects	100 – 200 micrograms	500 micrograms - 1 milligram	4 – 8 milligrams

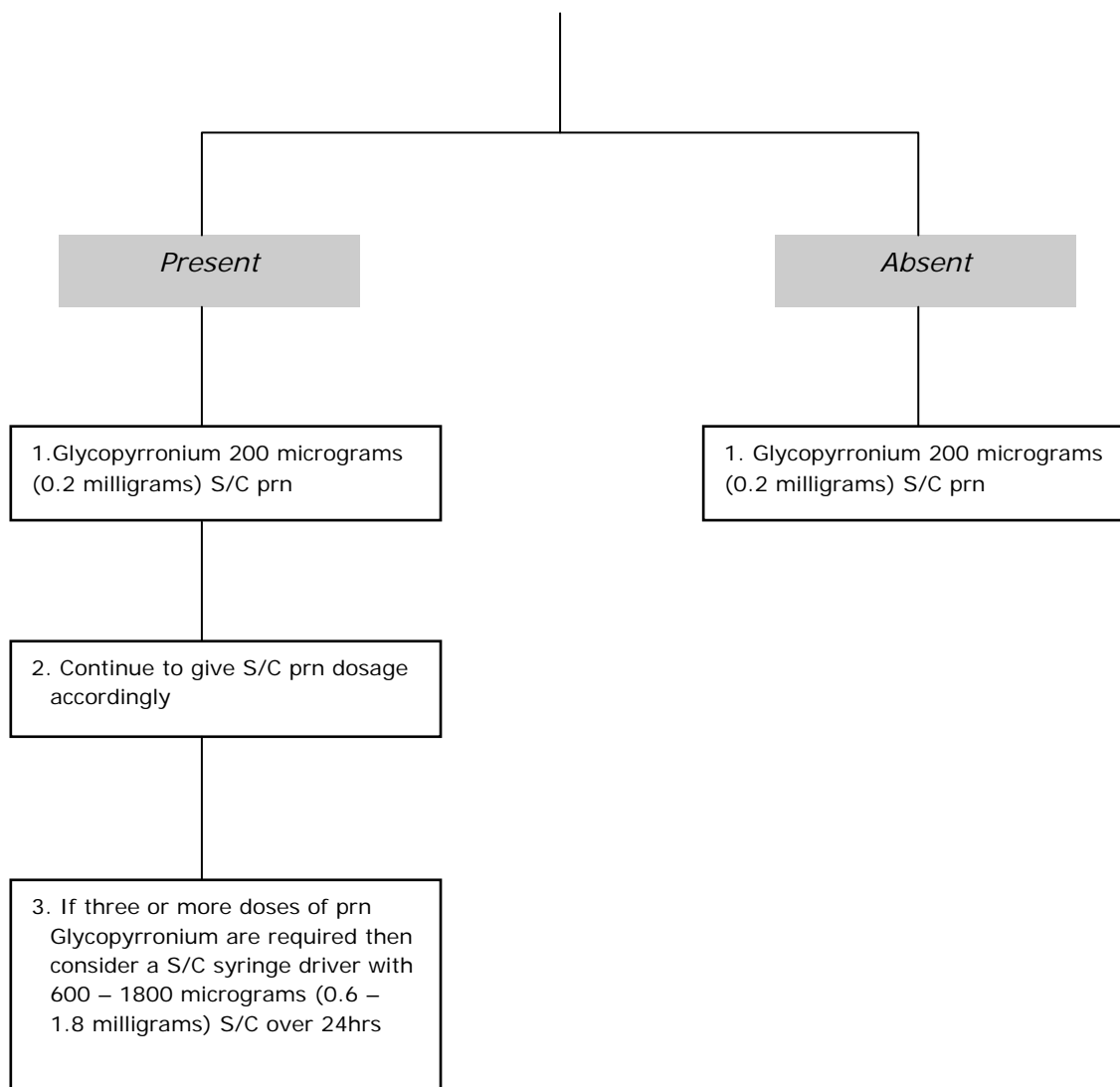
Terminal restlessness and agitation



SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

- **If symptoms persist contact the Specialist Palliative Care Team**
- Anticipatory prescribing in this manner will ensure that in the last hours / days of life there is no delay responding to a symptom if it occurs.
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Respiratory tract secretions

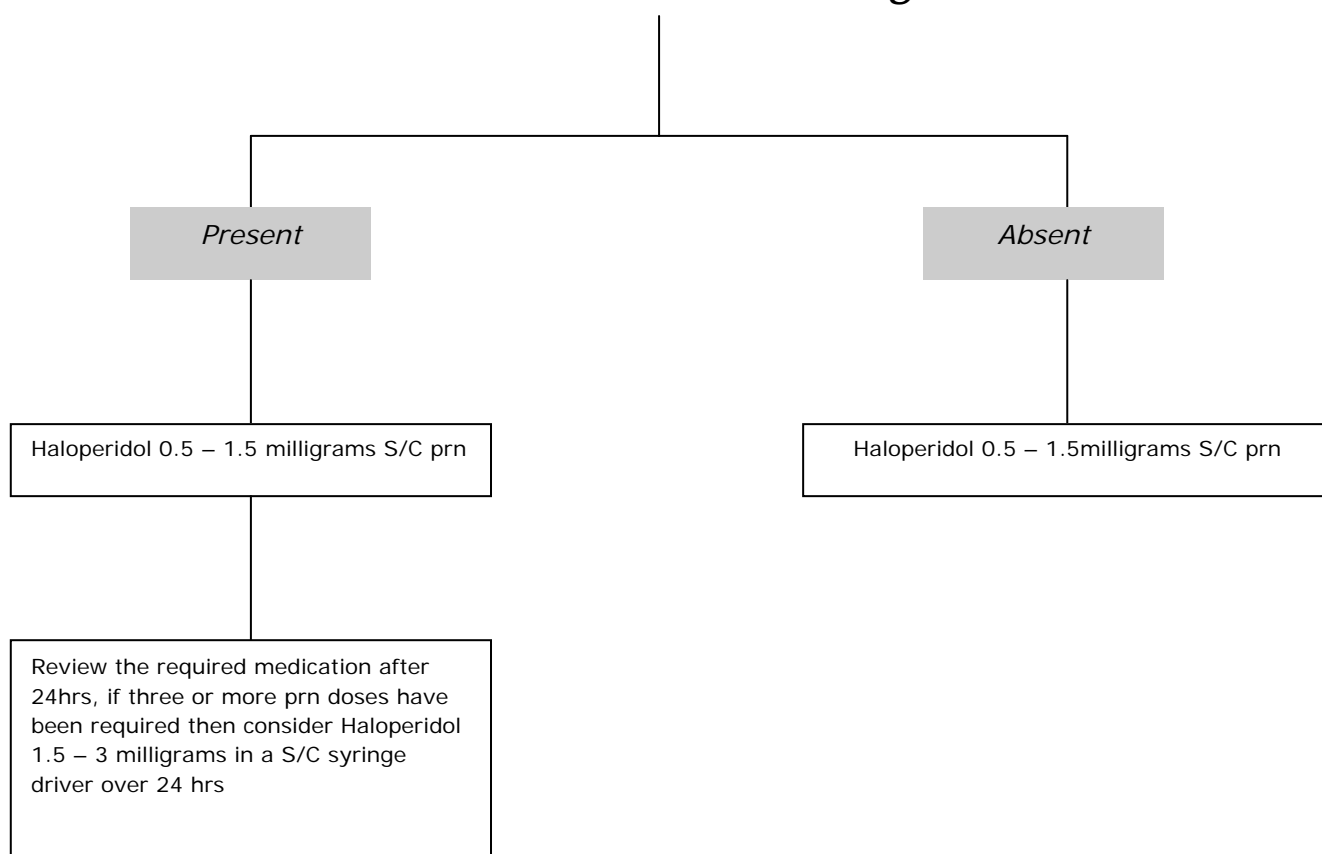


SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

- **If symptoms persist contact the Specialist Palliative Care Team**
- Hyoscine butylbromide 20 milligrams s/c prn may be used as an alternative. (If a S/C Syringe Driver is required then consider Hyoscine butylbromide 40 – 120 milligrams over 24 hours)
- Anticipatory prescribing in this manner will ensure that in the last hours / days of life there is no delay responding to a symptom if it occurs.
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Hyoscine Hydrobromide is not usually recommended

Nausea and Vomiting

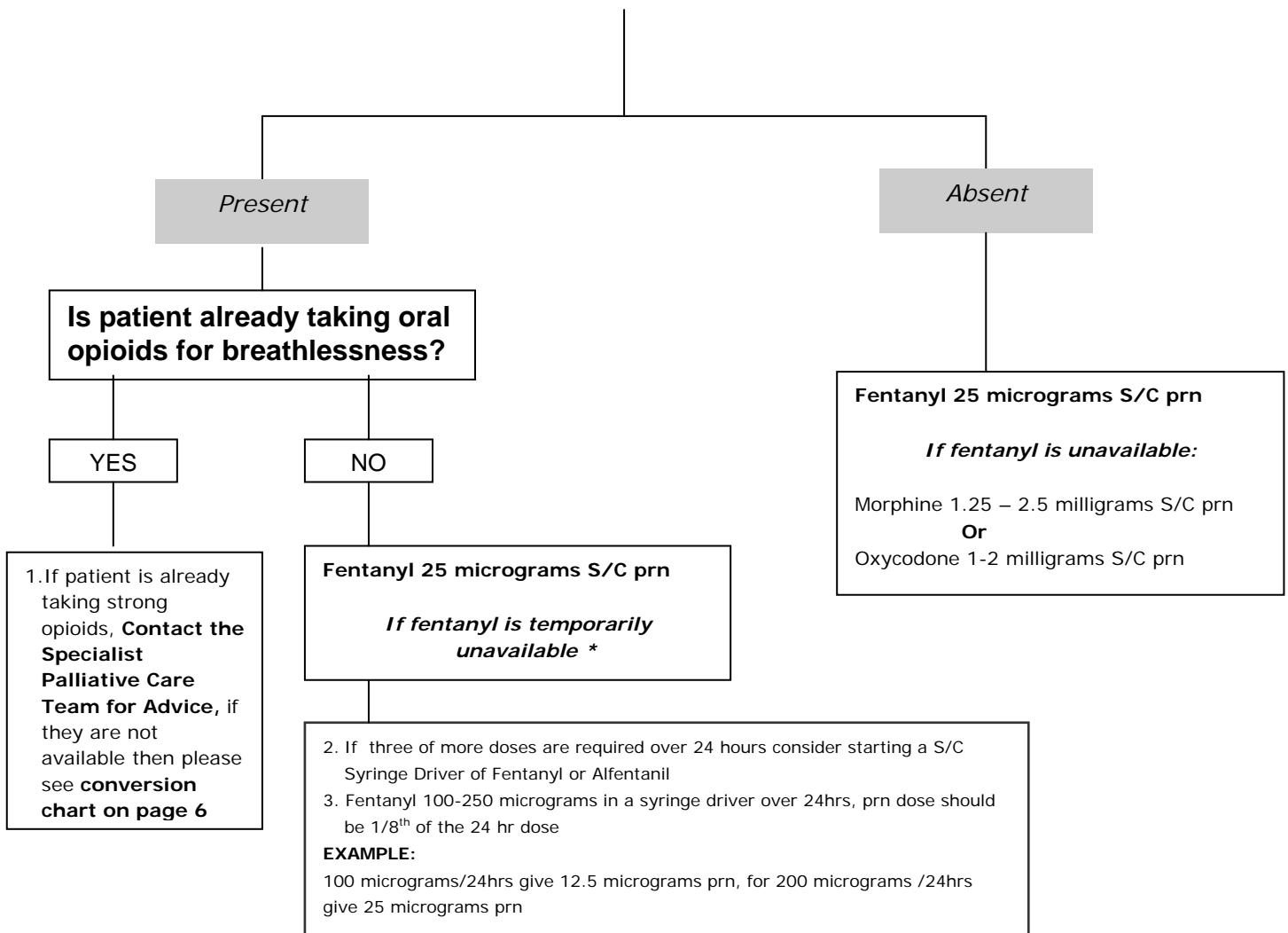


SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION;

- **If symptoms persist contact the Specialist Palliative Care Team**
- Levomepromazine 6.25 milligrams S/C prn – *suitable alternative second line* (if a Syringe Driver is required then consider 6.25 milligrams S/C in a Syringe Driver over 24 hours)
- Anticipatory prescribing in this manner will ensure that in the last hours / days of life there is no delay responding to a symptom if it occurs.
- ***The LCP National Renal Steering Group produced these guidelines according to best practice and evidence base***

Cyclizine is not usually recommended

Dyspnoea



SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

- **If symptoms persist contact the Specialist Palliative Care Team**
- To convert from other strong opioids contact Specialist Palliative Care Team / Pharmacy for further advice & support
- If the patient is breathless and anxious consider Midazolam 2.5 milligrams S/C prn
- * If Fentanyl is temporarily unavailable give:
Oxycodone 1-2 milligrams S/C prn
or
Morphine 1.25 – 2.5 milligrams S/C PRN
- Many of the opioid analgesics and their metabolites may accumulate in Renal Failure causing toxicity with myoclonic jerks, profound narcosis and respiratory depression. Morphine and its metabolites are most likely to cause toxicity. Fentanyl and Alfentanil are less likely to cause these problems, as the metabolites are not active. The duration of effect from Morphine and Oxycodone may last longer than in a patient with normal renal function. (See conversion table on Page 6)
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PROJECT GROUP

These guidelines have been produced by the National Liverpool Care Pathway for the Dying Patient (LCP) Renal Steering Group building on recent work undertaken by the Merseyside & Cheshire Palliative Care Network Audit Group.

This work has been led by:

Dr Claire Douglas, Specialist Registrar in Palliative Medicine at Mersey Deanery

Supported by:

- **Merseyside & Cheshire Palliative Care Network Audit Group – Renal Audit**
- **National Liverpool Care Pathway for the Dying Patient (LCP) Renal Steering Group**

Expert Consensus Group

Dr Claire A Douglas	SpR in Palliative Medicine	Mersey Deanery
Dr Stephanie Gomm	Consultant in Palliative Medicine	Salford Royal Foundation NHS Trust
Dr Jo Chambers	Consultant in Palliative Medicine	North Bristol NHS Trust
Dr Matthew Howse	Consultant Nephrologist	Royal Liverpool & Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust
Dr Polly Edmonds	Consultant in Palliative Medicine	Kings College Hospital NHS Trust
Dr Fliss Murtagh	SpR Research Training Fellow	Kings College Hospital NHS Trust
Dr Alistair Chesser	Consultant Nephrologist	Barts and the London NHS Trust
Dr Martine Meyer	Consultant in Palliative Medicine	Epsom & St Helier Hospitals NHS Trust

National Liverpool Care Pathway for the Dying Patient (LCP) Renal Steering Group

Name	Title
Marie Curie Palliative Care Institute Liverpool (MCPCIL)	
Prof John Ellershaw	Director
Deborah Murphy	Associate Director
Dr Claire Douglas	SpR in Palliative Medicine
Maria Bolger	LCP Facilitator
Ruth Agar	Associate LCP Facilitator
Maureen Gambles	Senior Research Fellow
Debbie Griffiths	External Events Coordinator – LCP Framework
Sian Edwards	Programme Administrator
Tamsin McGlinchey	Research Assistant
Kate Richardson	Research Assistant
Dr James Stevenson	SpR in Palliative Medicine
Elaine Whitby	Project Director, Education Pilot Project
Gill Hamblin	Non-Cancer Programme Lead
National Council for Palliative Care	
Eve Richardson	Chief Executive
Cheshire & Merseyside Strategic Health Authority	
Anita Roberts	End of Life Care Programme Lead
Cathy Wilcox	End of Life Care Deputy Programme Lead
North Bristol NHS Trust	
Dr Jo Chambers	Consultant in Palliative Medicine
Dr Colette Reid	SpR in Palliative Medicine
Marika Hills	Integrated Care Pathway Coordinator
Patsy Naidoo	Staff Nurse
Ann Banks	Staff Nurse - Renal ICP Link Nurse
Central Manchester & Manchester Children's University Hospital NHS Trust	
Sue Heatley	Pre Dialysis Nurse Specialist

Salford Royal Foundation NHS Trust	
Dr Stephanie Gomm	Consultant in Palliative Medicine / National Clinical Champion(LCP)
Bernadette Wilcox	Palliative Care CNS
Dr David New	Consultant Renal Physician
Cath Byrne	Pathway Facilitator
Royal Liverpool & Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust	
Dr Matthew Howse	Consultant Nephrologist
Wirral Hospitals NHS Trust	
Dr Cathy Lewis-Jones	Consultant in Palliative Medicine
Sandra Rowlands	Liverpool Care Pathway for the Dying Facilitator
Sheila Nugent	Palliative Care CNS
Hayley Lloyd	Renal Nurse
Sue Peters	Renal Nurse
Kings College Hospital NHS Trust	
Dr Polly Edmonds	Consultant in Palliative Medicine
Dr Fliss Murtagh	SpR Research Training Fellow
Mary Preston	Liverpool Care Pathway Lead
Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust	
Kay McConville	LCP Facilitator
Angela Devonport	Modern Matron – Renal
Wolverhampton NHS Trust	
Pam Magee	Director of Pharmaceutical Services
Barts and the London NHS Trust	
Dr Alistair Chesser	Consultant Nephrologist
Teresa Coyne	Macmillan Palliative Care CNS / LCP Lead
Pat Langstone	Macmillan Palliative Care CNS
Epsom & St Helier Hospitals NHS Trust	
Dr Martine Meyer	Consultant in Palliative Medicine
Valerie Crooks	LCP Facilitator
National Kidney Federation	
Tim Statham	Chief Executive
Robert Dunn	National Advocacy Officer
Dudley Group of Hospitals NHS Trust	
Dr Ruth Benzimra	Consultant Nephrologist
Department of Health	
Sue Hawkett OBE	Nursing Adviser / Team Leader (Supportive & Palliative Care) Cancer Policy Team
Claire Henry	Programme Director National End of Life Care Programme
Jane Verity	Renal NSF Team
Gerry Lynch	Team Leader Renal NSF
Brighton & Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust	
Dr Andreas Hiersche	Macmillan Consultant Palliative Care
St Catherine's Hospice, Scarborough	
Dr Miriam Johnson	Consultant in Palliative Medicine

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CONTACT DETAILS

Should you wish to contact the Marie Curie Palliative Care Institute Liverpool, then please see the contact details below

Professor John Ellershaw
Director
Marie Curie Palliative Care Institute Liverpool
c/o Marie Curie Hospice Liverpool
Speke Road,
Woolton
Liverpool
L25 8QA

T: 0151 801 1490
E: john.ellershaw@mariecurie.org.uk

Deborah Murphy
Associate Director
Marie Curie Palliative Care Institute Liverpool
c/o Directorate of Specialist Palliative Care
1st Floor, Linda McCartney Centre
The Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals
Prescot Street
Liverpool
L7 8XP

T: 0151 706 2274
E: deborah.murphy@rlbuht.nhs.uk

USEFUL WEBSITES

Marie Curie Palliative Care Institute Liverpool	www.mcpcil.org.uk
Department of Health	www.dh.gov.uk
The Renal Association	www.renal.org
British Renal Society	www.britishrenal.org
End of Life Care Programme	www.endoflifecare.nhs.uk

Marie Curie Palliative Care Institute Liverpool
www.mcpcil.org.uk

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