Palliative outpatient parenteral antimicrobial therapy (OPAT): a single centre experience and systematic scoping review
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Background

Outpatient parenteral antimicrobial therapy (OPAT) is usually employed to treat infections with predictable course, anticipated response to therapy and low probability of progression. There has been little consideration of OPAT for palliation only. This study presents our centre’s experience of palliative OPAT and a scoping review of literature to provide an overview of palliative OPAT.

Methods

We performed a retrospective review of patients with incurable and life-limiting infections who received lifelong antibiotics between September 2016 and April 2022 at an OPAT service based in tertiary referral hospital in Derbyshire, UK. We also conducted a scoping review following the Joanna Briggs Institute approach. The Cochrane Library, CINAHL, EMCARE, EMBASE and MEDLINE were systemically searched for papers published in English.

Results

Over the 5.5-year study period, six patients received OPAT for palliation with a mean age of 61 years. They accounted for 0.6% (6/1044) and 3.1% (1135/36658) of the total number of patients via OPAT and bed-days saved, respectively. The literature search yielded 2375 articles, of which 5 were included in this scoping review. All the included papers were case studies. Palliative OPAT provided positive experiences and outcomes for patients and their families.

Conclusions

There is a need for further research to address significant gaps in knowledge, especially regarding patients’ experiences and perspectives. In addition, quality of life studies comparing palliative OPAT with inpatient intravenous treatment may improve patient experience, support and improve use of OPAT for palliation.