

An Effective Way for Treating Upper Abdominal Cancer Pain

Cancer is one of the major causes of death in Hong Kong, which will not only ruin the health of human, but also cause chronic pain. Patients with upper abdominal cancers, like gastric cancer and liver cancer, suffer from moderate to severe pain and require take potent analgesic to control their pain, such as morphine. Although morphine will not harm the major organs like stomach, liver and kidney, some patients may not tolerate its side effects like nausea, vomiting and constipation. Taking analgesic for long time can also cause poor digestive system and diminish its efficacy. The Department of Anaesthesiology of HKU LKS Faculty of Medicine had used the neurolytic celiac plexus block (NCPB) technique to manage the upper abdominal cancer pain. This treatment can significantly improve patients' quality of life as results of pain relief, especially those at terminate stage.

The Coeliac Plexus is a network of nerves transmitting pain from upper abdominal viscera. The use of NCPB technique can help control the upper abdominal cancer pain by blocking of nerve plexus, which can last for several weeks to months. It have been shown that NCPB technique is effective in relieving pain due to pancreatic cancer and other upper abdominal malignances in 85% and 73% respectively. It has also been recommended by the Cancer Pain Relief Program of World Health Organization (WHO). However, side effects may be found, but not severe, including drowsiness, dizziness, vomiting, diarrhea and hypotension etc. Patients with thrombocytopenia, hypotension, fever and severe drug reaction are not recommended.