What role for capsaicin in diabetic peripheral neuropathy?

**Question 1**
Peripheral neuropathy is a common long-term complication of diabetes mellitus. How many people with diabetic neuropathy are thought to be affected by pain?

a. 10–20%
b. 20–30%
c. 30–40%
d. 40–50%
e. 50–60%

Answer: d. Pain affects 10–20% of patients with diabetes and 40–50% of patients with diabetic neuropathy.

**Question 2**
According to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), which one of the following is not a recommended first-line option for the treatment of painful diabetic peripheral neuropathy in a non-specialist setting?

a. duloxetine
b. venlafaxine
c. amitriptyline
d. pregabalin
e. gabapentin

Answer: b. For the treatment of neuropathic pain in a non-specialist setting, NICE recommends offering a choice of amitriptyline, duloxetine, gabapentin or pregabalin as initial treatment.

**Question 3**
In a systematic review and meta-analysis of drug treatments for neuropathic pain from different causes, how many people needed to be treated with the capsaicin patch for one person to experience improvement in pain?

a. 3
b. 7
c. 11
d. 15
e. 19

Answer: c. A recent systematic review and meta-analysis of data from published and unpublished randomised double-blind placebo-controlled trials of drug treatments in adults with neuropathic pain from a variety of causes estimated the number-needed-to-treat for capsaicin patches as 11 (compared with 6 for drugs such as duloxetine, 7 for gabapentin and 8 for pregabalin).

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Question 4

In a double-blind placebo-controlled trial in people with painful diabetic neuropathy and HbA1c ≤11% (97mmol/mol), compared with placebo, what was the difference in the percentage of patients in the intention-to-treat population who experienced at least a 30% reduction in pain with the capsaicin patch?

a. 9.2%
b. 18.7%
c. 24.3%
d. 31.7%
e. 40.9%

Answer: a. In a double-blind trial, 369 patients were randomised to capsaicin patch (Qutenza) or a placebo patch. In the intention-to-treat population, the proportion of patients using the active patch that had at least a 30% reduction in pain was 40.9% (vs. 31.7% with placebo), but the significance of this difference was borderline (p=0.049).

Question 5

What proportion of patients with peripheral diabetic neuropathy who were treated with a capsaicin patch experienced treatment emergent adverse effects associated with neurological function?

a. 0.9%
b. 2.7%
c. 4.4%
d. 7.4%
e. 11.8%

Answer: e. With the patch, more patients with peripheral diabetic neuropathy experienced treatment-emergent adverse effects associated with neurological function (11.8%) compared with the non-diabetic population (4.4%). The difference was mainly due to the difference in the reports of burning sensation (11.2% vs. 0.7%, respectively).