

Original Article

Assessing Awareness and Compliance with Hydrocortisone Treatment and Sick Day Rules among Patients with Adrenal Insufficiency - A Clinical Audit

Gajaweera G¹

¹Diabetes and Endocrine Unit, National Hospital, Kandy, Sri Lanka

Correspondence email: gayanmg043@gmail.com

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-9440-7740>

Copyright: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. (CC BY 4.0)

Introduction

Adrenal Insufficiency (AI) can be caused by primary, secondary, or tertiary failure of hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis. AI is a potentially life-threatening condition due to the development of adrenal crisis, which can be prevented by proper patient education.

Conclusion

This clinical audit was an eye-opener to understand knowledge and practice gaps in HC taking AI patients in our clinic. This emphasized the necessity of a well-structured educational program with frequent reassessment and reinforcement for better outcomes.

Method

This clinical audit was conducted over 3 months in the Endocrine clinic in District General Hospital-Vavuniya (March - May 2025), and all patients with AI taking hydrocortisone (HC) were included by consecutive sampling. With informed consent, data were collected via an interviewer-administered questionnaire during patients' routine clinic visits. This approach enhanced data quality and allowed the patients to clarify their doubts and gain knowledge.

Results

A total of 33 patients were assessed by this clinical audit (mean age 43.4 years; 75.8% female). The most common diagnosis was primary adrenal insufficiency (54.5%). 15.2% of the total had developed overt adrenal insufficiency during their lifetime.

97.0% of patients were aware that they were taking hydrocortisone (HC), but surprisingly 54.5% had no understanding of the reason. 72.7% of the patients had adhered to the correct timing of HC doses. Majority of the patients (57.6%) were on three doses of HC per day.

Regarding drug adherence, 69.7% understood the importance of drug compliance, but strict drug compliance was observed only in 60.6%. While 81.8% had received necessary advices, only 72.7% knew about the importance of continuation of treatment and increasing the drug doses during stresses. Merely 27.3% knew about retaking the HC same dose after vomiting and only 30.3% knew when to seek urgent medical care. A significant portion of the patients (63.6%) had no steroid alert card due to many reasons.