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Director

Shingles Support Society

Objectives

Patients ask the charity about shingles and post herpetic neuralgia. Shingles is a rash caused by the reactivated chickenpox virus coming back to the skin surface, often many years after chickenpox was first caught. People who have not had chickenpox cannot get shingles. Sometimes something 'triggers' the virus to awaken or reactivate and shingles appears. It can happen at any age, but is more likely to affect older people. About 60 % of 85 year olds will have had shingles. After the shingles has healed, some people are left with pain in the area affected by the shingles. This is called post herpetic neuralgia and is more common in older people. Patients reported that family doctors (GPs) did not know how shingles was transmitted nor did they know how to treat post herpetic neuralgia. This is a neuropathic pain which does not respond to 'ordinary painkillers'. This neuropathic pain varies in intensity from patient to patient, but in the worst cases it can "render the patients' final years an unendurable misery" as one pain doctor told us. Shingles Support Society decided to create an information pack that would supply all the information that a patient with shingles or post herpetic neuralgia will need. It includes four pages of detailed and referenced treatment information for the GP, written by pain specialist (consultant in anaesthesia), as well as leaflets on other aspects of shingles and post herpetic neuralgia.

Outcome

The information pack on shingles and post herpetic neuralgia allows the patient to ask the GP for pain treatments which have not been considered. These may correctly treat the pain. If the patient is lucky enough to respond well, normal life can resume. Even when the patient only gets partial relief, this can sometimes be enough to allow the patient to leave the house, partake in social events and even resume work. The pack also includes a full explanation of what shingles is and how it is not infectious in social situation, two pages of self-help suggestions, two pages on the use of TENS machines, two pages of contact details given by patients who are happy to talk/email other patients.

Information about Good Practice Applicant

She is the director of the shingles support society. Since 1989, the Shingles Support Society responds to questions about shingles (Herpes Zoster): its infectivity, its treatment, what self-help can do.



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Category:
**Empowerment,
Professional education**

**Shingles & PHN
information pack**