

Diamorphine, essential opioid – or time to say goodbye?

February 2010

Number of responses = 145

1) In the last 6 months, have you used diamorphine? (yes_no)

answer	votes	% of vote
Yes	133	92%
No	11	8%

2) If **YES**, which statement best reflects your main use of diamorphine? (one_of)

answer	votes	% of vote
First-line parenteral opioid	75	52%
Alternative parenteral opioid, but not routinely first-line	35	24%
Alternative parenteral opioid, but only when volume issues for CSCI pumps	23	16%

3) Please indicate which opioid you generally use first-line parenterally (one_of)

answer	votes	% of vote
Alfentanil	1	1%
Diamorphine	70	48%
Fentanyl (by injection)	0	0%
Hydromorphone	0	0%
Methadone	0	0%
Morphine	68	47%
Oxycodone	1	1%

4) Do you believe that it is in the best interest of your patients for the Government to try and maintain the supply of diamorphine to the NHS? (yes_no)

answer	votes	% of vote
Yes	134	92%
No	9	6%

5) Please explain your reasoning to your answer to question 4.

A total of 93 members expanded their answer of YES to question 4, several gave multiple reasons. The overwhelming reason for why the government should maintain the supply of diamorphine to the NHS (cited by 83 members) was the ability to use a high dose of opioid in a small volume, particularly important in cachexic patients and paediatrics and for stat doses or continuous subcutaneous infusions singularly or mixed with other drugs.

Other reasons in favour of maintaining a supply of diamorphine were;

- there is a large amount of compatibility data and experience in mixing diamorphine with other drugs (cited by 19 members)
- familiarity with use and therefore less risk of safety issues with dosing and conversion from PO opioid (cited by 16 members)
- it is effective and well tolerated by patients (cited by 15 members)
- cost effective (cited by 11 members)
- well researched and great experience of use (cited by 3 members)

Only 3 responses of NO were recorded, 2 members have not found any problems in switching to morphine as first-line-drug, and 1 member reported that morphine was cheaper than diamorphine.

6) Further comments

The majority of further comments echoed those answers in question 5.

In summary palliativedrugs.com members overwhelmingly feel diamorphine is an essential opioid and it should be available to the NHS.