

Abstract

Opioid pain medications are currently viewed as a standard part of pain control in the vast majority of surgical procedures. However, opioid pain medications can have harmful effects on patients leading to increased length of hospital stay, unplanned readmission, and contribution to relapse or development of opioid use disorder. An opportunity for improved practice of pain management lies within opioid alternative pain medications such as dexmedetomidine.

Evidence-based literature reviews have shown that dexmedetomidine has promise as an analgesic medication within the perioperative period with fewer harmful side effects. Barriers to more widespread use of this medication include staff unfamiliarity with the safety profile of this medication, appropriate dosing, and patient population recommendations. To facilitate our scholarly project, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists were provided with an educational module in the form of a PowerPoint presentation with a voice-over module that included a pre and post-test to evaluate if increased provider education could influence practice change with regards to dexmedetomidine use. One hundred pre and post-tests were distributed at the project site. Three responses were returned. This led to inconclusive results and further work is required to increase the adoption and use of dexmedetomidine into daily anesthesia practice at this location.

Keywords: dexmedetomidine, opioid substance use disorder, perioperative analgesia, opioid alternatives, analgesia, anesthesia education