

PRESCRIBING AT THE END OF LIFE: THE CORE FOUR DRUGS

CORE FOUR Indications in the last days of life	CORE FOUR drugs for the last days of life	Alternatives*
Pain or emergency	Rx Diamorphine injection: dose 5-10 mg or one sixth of current 24 hour diamorphine requirement	*Sublingual diamorphine 10mg or Morphine conc. liquid 20mg/5ml sublingual
Nausea/vomiting	Rx Cyclizine injection 50mg	Buccal prochlorperazine 3mg / rectal prochlorperazine 5mg
Excess secretions	Rx Hyoscine hydrobromide injection 0.4mg	Hyoscine transdermal patch 1mg/72hrs (may need 2-3)
Agitation/restlessness	Rx Midazolam injection 10mg	*Sublingual lorazepam 1mg/rectal diazepam 10mg

*Sublingual administration is not always easy for patients if the mouth is dry, co-ordination is poor and cognitive function is reduced. Rectal administration can be a challenge for carers both physically (turning and positioning the patient) and emotionally.

Other useful drugs are haloperidol and levomepromazine