



National Prescribing Service Limited



## Case study 55: Treatment options for neuropathic pain

(for GPs, pharmacists, nurses and other health professionals)

NPS case studies are designed to help you refine your clinical decision-making skills. After you complete and submit the case study, you will receive expert commentaries along with aggregated responses that provide a snapshot of your colleagues' responses.

### Scenario

Doris is a 64-year-old war widow with a 15-year history of well-controlled type 2 diabetes. She comes to you complaining of severe discomfort in her calves and feet.

Two months ago she noticed burning and tingling in both feet but put it down to cold weather and "poor circulation" as her hands and feet have always felt cold and numb. She recalls feeling, at times, "electric shocks" through her legs which have lately become more painful. She denies pain on walking and does not have lumbar pain or sciatica. She took maximum recommended doses of paracetamol for four days but stopped when it did not help. Over-the-counter ibuprofen resulted in stomach discomfort even when taken after food. She describes the pain now as like "someone jabbing pins and needles" into her. She would like your recommendation on treatments preferably subsidised by her "gold card".

She does not smoke but finds a glass of sherry before bedtime helps with her sleep as the pain is worse at night and wakes her. She has expressed concern about using "narcotics" to control her pain because of media reports about people abusing these medications and the potential for addiction.

She is currently on metformin 500 mg three-times daily and gliclazide 80 mg twice a day. On examination, her peripheral pulses and skin colour are normal. Blood pressure is 135/79 mmHg. Three months ago, glycosylated haemoglobin was 7% and total cholesterol was 4.8 mmol/L. Liver and renal function were normal, as were thyroid function tests and serum levels of B12.

### How to participate

**All participants:** Complete ALL questions, fill in appropriate details and sign the consent agreement in the 'Your details' box (see over).

**GPs:** To be included in the **Quality Prescribing Initiative** of the **Practice Incentives Program (PIP)**, quote your **provider and prescriber numbers** in the spaces provided.

**Pharmacists:** This activity is recognised for continuing professional development by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA), the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) and the Australian Association of Consultant Pharmacy (AACP). PSA members, quote your membership number in the space provided. SHPA and AACP members, please self-record this activity. For details on recording participation, see <http://casestudy.nps.org.au>

**Send to NPS by:**  
**5 December 2008**

**Send to:** NPS  
PO Box 1147  
Strawberry Hills NSW 2012  
**Or fax to:** (02) 9211 7579

**Complete and submit your case study  
online at: <http://casestudy.nps.org.au>**

## Case study 55: Treatment options for neuropathic pain

NPS office use only

Read the scenario overleaf and complete ALL the questions.

1. What medication(s) would you recommend for Doris' pain at this visit?  
(List only one medication per line)

| Medication | Starting dose and frequency | Reason for choice |
|------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| i) _____   | _____                       | _____             |
| ii) _____  | _____                       | _____             |
| iii) _____ | _____                       | _____             |

2. a) How long after starting drug therapy would you assess effectiveness?

\_\_\_\_\_

b) How would you assess the effectiveness of the medication(s)?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- c) If you used a pain scale in question 2b, please specify the scale you used.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. a) Would you recommend non-pharmacological therapy for Doris' pain?

Yes  No

- b) If yes, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

4. Doris returns 2 months later still complaining of pain despite using the maximum tolerated dose of the medication(s) in question 1. What medication(s) would you recommend next? (List only one medication per line)

| Medication | Starting dose and frequency | Reason for choice |
|------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| i) _____   | _____                       | _____             |
| ii) _____  | _____                       | _____             |
| iii) _____ | _____                       | _____             |

5. List 2 strategies or tips you would give to aid Doris to manage her pain relief regimen.
- i) \_\_\_\_\_
- ii) \_\_\_\_\_

### Your details

Please tick one  GP  Pharmacist  Other health professional  
 GP registrar  Intern pharmacist  Student – medical  
 Other medical specialist  Registered nurse (RN Div 1)  Student – other  
 Enrolled nurse (RN Div 2)

Title

Family name

Given name

Postal address

Suburb/town

State

Postcode

Phone number

### GPs

Provider no.

Prescriber no.

### Pharmacists (PSA members only)

Membership no.

(SHPA and AACP members, please self-report)

### Important:

Required for you to be included in the Quality Prescribing Initiative, or receive 1 PSA credit point.

All participants must sign: I consent to these data being recorded (as applicable) for the purposes of PIP, PSA credit points and NPS evaluation.

Participant's signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date:  /  /   
 day month year