Intrathecal chemotherapy—a word of caution

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Dear Editor,

I read with interest the review on the use of intrathecal (IT) chemotherapy recently published in *The Journal* [1]. The authors have overlooked one important aspect in relation to IT therapy, which can result in patient harm. Any medication used for administration via the IT route should be preservative-free.

The IT injection of products containing preservatives, particularly benzyl alcohol, must be avoided because of the documented risks of anaphylaxis and potential for neurotoxicity from the preservative agent [2]. An IT injection of preparations containing benzyl alcohol is known to increase the incidence of adverse neurological events. Reported events include paraparesis, fibrosis of the cauda equina and segmental demyelination of the dorsal and ventral roots. [2]

It is standard practice that any agent given intrathecally must be preservative-free. [2]

Physicians, pharmacists and nurses involved in the preparation or administration of IT therapy must ensure preservative-free products are used.

References

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