Managing Unexplained Thrombocytosis in Primary Care

CONSIDER POSSIBLE CAUSES (INFECTION, INFLAMMATION, BLOOD LOSS (INCLUDING MENSTRUAL), MYELOPROLIFERATIVE DISORDERS & MALIGNANCY)

REVIEW & REPEAT FBC IF LIKELY UNDERLYING CAUSE PRESENT (80-90% CASES ARE REACTIVE THROMBOCYTOSIS)

CONSIDER URGENT HAEMATOLOGY REFERRAL IF PLATELET COUNT >1000x10^9/L OR RECENT THROMBOSIS. CONSIDER ROUTINE REFERRAL IF 2 PLATELET COUNTS >600x10^9/L OVER 6-12 WEEKS AND ALTERNATIVE CAUSE NOT IDENTIFIED

IF UNEXPLAINED THROMBOCYTOSIS OR NOT RESOLVING: CHECK FERRITIN, CRP & BLOOD FILM IN ADDITION TO MORE DETAILED HISTORY-TAKING TO ELICIT ANY RED FLAGS

AN UNEXPLAINED THROMBOCYTOSIS SHOULD PROMPT US TO "THINK CANCER"

USE CLINICAL JUDGEMENT TO GUIDE NEXT MOST APPROPRIATE STEPS

EXCLUDE LEGO-C CANCERS (SEE FOOTNOTES):
- CONSIDER AN URGENT CXR (WITHIN 2 WEEKS)
- CONSIDER DIRECT-ACCESS PELVIC USS IN WOMEN >55Y & UNEXPLAINED VAGINAL DISCHARGE OR MACROSCOPIC HAEMATURIA
- CONSIDER NON-URGENT UGIE IF >55Y & ASSOCIATED UGI SYMPTOMS AND/OR WEIGHT LOSS
- CONSIDER A QFIT (IF AVAILABLE) OR URGENT GI INVESTIGATIONS IN MALES & POST-MENOPAUSAL WOMEN WITH LOW FERRITIN

CONSIDER A JAK-2 GENE MUTATION TEST (IF AVAILABLE) & HAEMATOLOGY REFERRAL TO EXCLUDE MYELOPROLIFERATIVE DISORDERS
- CONSIDER AN UNEXPLAINED SYMPTOMS OF CANCER REFERRAL (IF AVAILABLE)

SAFETY-NETTING (CONSIDER WEIGHT DIARY) & CHECK FOR RESOLUTION OF THROMBOCYTOSIS DEPENDING ON THE CONDITION BEING TREATED OR SUSPECTED - REPEAT FBC 4-12 WEEKS (80% OF CASES RESOLVE WITHIN 12 WEEKS)

Footnotes
- NICE NG12 & Scottish referral guidelines for suspected cancer remind us that unexplained thrombocytosis is a risk marker for some solid tumour malignancies
- However, thrombocytosis shouldn't be used as a standalone diagnostic or screening test for cancer or to rule out cancer
- Unexplained thrombocytosis should prompt us to "think cancer"
- The Scottish Referral Guidelines for Suspected Cancer 2019 include thrombocytosis in the investigation criteria for LEGO-C cancers: Lung, Endometrium, Gastric, Oesophageal & Colorectal
- NICE NG12 Suspected Cancer: Recognition and Referral 2015 includes thrombocytosis in the investigation criteria for LEGO cancers: Lung, Endometrium, Gastric & Oesophageal

Glossary of Abbreviations
- FBC: Full blood count
- CRP: C-reactive protein
- CXR: Chest x-ray
- USS: Ultrasound scan
- UGIE: Upper gastrointestinal endoscopy
- qFIT: Quantitative faecal immunochemical test
- JAK-2: Janus kinase 2 gene - provides instructions for making a protein that promotes growth and proliferation of cells

References
- Scottish Referral Guidelines for Suspected Cancer 2019
  http://www.cancerreferral.scot.nhs.uk
- NICE NG12 Suspected Cancer: Recognition and Referral 2015
  https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng12
- Clinical Relevance of Thrombocytosis in Primary Care. BJGP 2017;67(659):e405-e413

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