

Recognition and evaluation of pain in dogs with otitis

Clinical study design

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INTRODUCTION

Otitis externa (OE) and otitis media (OM) are the inflammation of the external ear canal and the middle ear respectively. Otolgia is one of the clinical findings, combined with neck and temporo-mandibular joint pain. Glucocorticoids are widely used in its treatment, but there is little evidence of analgesic drugs use.

OBJECTIVES

- 1 Characterization of Spanish veterinary dermatologists' attitudes regarding pain assessment and treatment of canine otitis.
- 2 Design of a pain-oriented diagnostic approach of dogs with auricular disease for study of pain and correlation with quality of life (QoL) and clinical severity.

RESULTS

	n	Agree (%)	Somewhat agree (%)	Cannot say (%)	Somewhat disagree (%)	Disagree (%)
It is difficult to recognize pain in dogs	54	11 (20,4)	25 (46,3)	1 (1,9)	13 (24,1)	4 (7,4)
The owner interpret pain behavior better than a veterinarian	54	27 (50)	17 (31,5)	0 (0)	5 (9,3)	5 (9,3)
Owners insist on analgesics treatment	54	8 (14,8)	22 (40,7)	0 (0)	13 (24,1)	11 (20,4)

n = total number of responses, SD = standard deviation

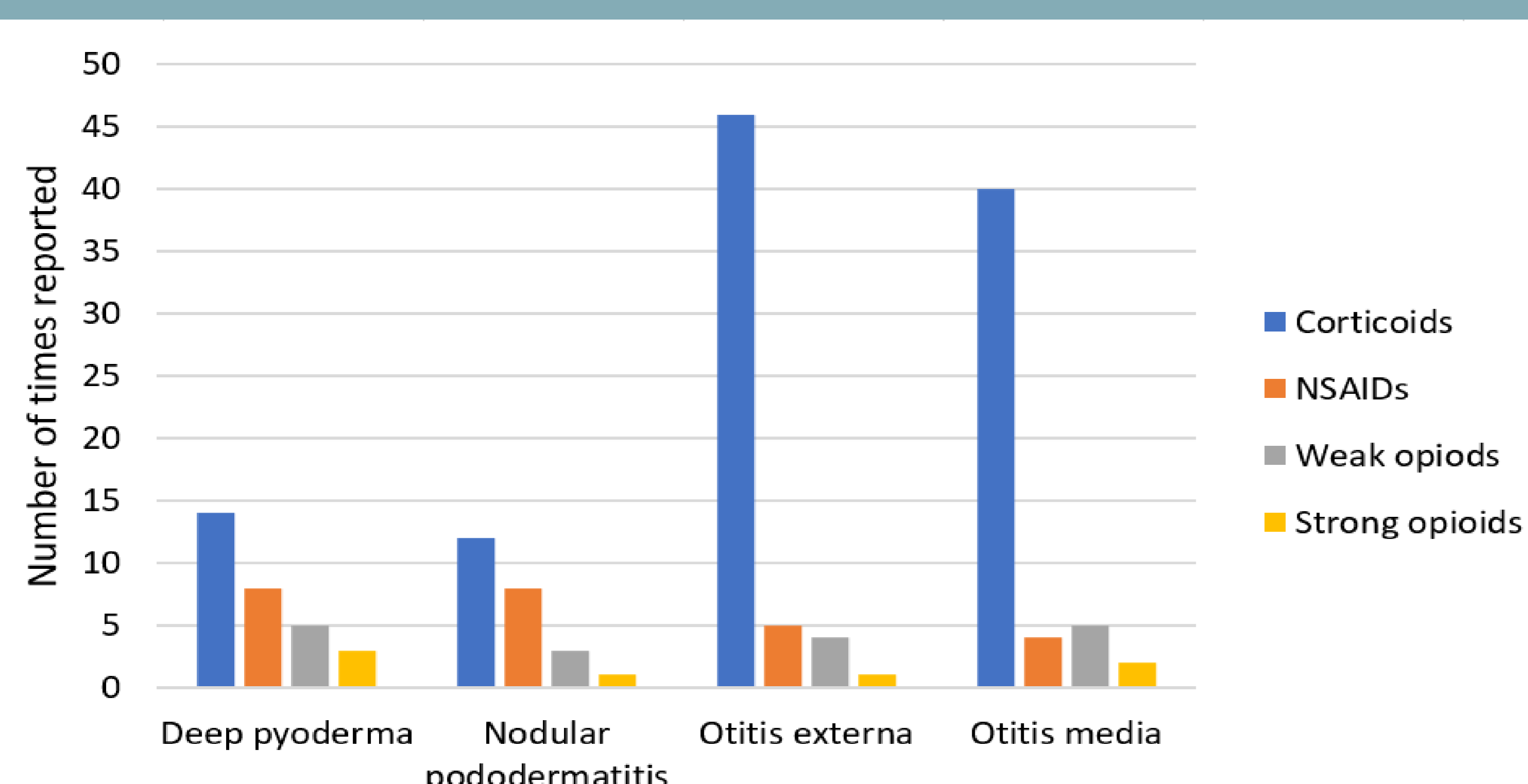


Fig. 1. Use of anti-inflammatory and analgesic drugs in four diseases.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- 1 A questionnaire about attitudes in front of pain assessment and treatment. Comparison of four dermatological conditions.
- 2 Pain assessment at palpation of external ear canal, region of tympanic bulla and opening of the mouth by a simple descriptive score and visual analogue scale (VAS).

Evaluation of chronic pain by a self-made protocol using pressure threshold and response to non-painful stimuli (repeated 2cm-long brush-stroke)⁽¹⁾.

Tutor's assessed intensity of dog's pain with a brief questionnaire of canine pain, consisting in numerical rating scales (0-10)⁽²⁾.

Clinical severity is measured by the OTI-3 scale⁽³⁾.

Quality of life (QoL) of owners and dogs is evaluated by Noli's questionnaire of QoL in dermatology patients⁽⁴⁾.

	n	Mean \pm SD	Median	Min-Max	Significantly different from
a) Deep pyoderma	54	6.48 \pm 1.96	7	1-10	b, d
b) Nodular pododermatitis	54	7.31 \pm 1.26	7	3-9	a, d
c) External otitis	54	7.11 \pm 1.34	7	3-10	d
d) Otitis media	54	8.19 \pm 1.48	8	2-10	a, b, c

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Veterinarians have **difficulties assessing pain** and agree that owner's appreciation of behaviour changes could be trustworthy.

OE and OM are considered painful conditions, especially OM, possibly for its usually chronic nature and involvement of bony structures. Consequently, more strong analgesics are used. Nevertheless, in general, **little analgesia is used** in OE (24.1%) and OM (27.8%), probably endorsed by inflammatory pain alleviation effects of corticosteroids.

The pain-oriented **diagnostic tool** developed will be useful to **recognize and assess pain in OE and OM** in order to **establish a correct management of pain** and ensure quality of life of dogs and owners.

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