

Is Cancer-Related Fatigue the Sixth Vital Sign?

More than 6,000 articles published since the 1950s associate fatigue and cancer in PubMed®. However, the issue began to become more widely recognized as clinically significant in the 1980s, and intervention studies began appearing in the literature in the 1990s. The Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) hosted and published a State of the Knowledge Conference on Fatigue in 1994; since that time, much has happened in understanding and managing one of the most commonly experienced cancer-related symptoms.

This supplement is based on a satellite symposium, “Cancer-Related Fatigue: The Sixth Vital Sign?” held in April 2007 at the ONS 32nd Annual Congress. The symposium was organized by Acumentis (now IME, LLC) and was generously supported by an unrestricted educational grant from Cephalon, Inc. Internationally recognized faculty provided an overview of the incidence and clinical impact of cancer-related fatigue (CRF) in patients undergoing cancer therapy and in cancer survivors. Clinical scenarios were used to illustrate the challenges in diagnosing, assessing, and managing CRF and to

evaluate current and emerging treatment modalities. The audience also participated as they were polled about current practice patterns at their respective institutions and about their experience in evaluating CRF and its treatment. We wanted to provide this rich resource to our *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing* readers to facilitate the recognition, assessment, and management of this significant and widespread issue.

In “Cancer-Related Fatigue: A Brief Overview of Current Nursing Perspectives and Experiences,” Barbara Given, PhD, RN, FAAN, discusses findings from the symposium at the ONS 32nd Annual Congress and the barriers nurses face in implementing CRF assessment in their practices.

Xin Shelley Wang, MD, MPH, follows with “Pathophysiology of Cancer-Related Fatigue” and discusses how the mechanism that is needed to create CRF in patients is unknown to healthcare professionals. However, researchers are identifying factors that may contribute to CRF development.

“Management of Cancer-Related Fatigue” by Andrea M. Barsevick, PhD, RN,

AOCN®, Tracey Newhall, RN, BS, OCN®, and Susan Brown, RN, OCN®, CCRP, outlines possible guidelines for CRF management and pharmacologic and nonpharmacologic interventions that are available to patients.

William Breitbart, MD, and Yesne Alici, MD, follow with “Pharmacologic Treatment Options for Cancer-Related Fatigue: Current State of Clinical Research.” The authors discuss the use of psychostimulants, wakefulness-promoting agents, antidepressants, and cholinesterase inhibitors as possible CRF treatments.

Wrapping up the supplement is “Cancer-Related Fatigue: Role of Oncology Nurses in Translating National Comprehensive Cancer Network Assessment Guidelines Into Practice” by Barbara F. Piper, DNSc, RN, AOCN®, FAAN, Tami Borne-man, MSN, RN, CNS, Virginia Chih-Yi Sun, MSN, RN, ANP, Marianna Koczywas, MD, Gwen Uman, PhD, RN, Betty Ferrell, PhD, RN, FAAN, and Raysenia L. James, MPH, BS. The authors discuss guidelines set forth by the National Comprehensive Cancer Network and the barriers that hinder their translation into the practice setting.

Acumentis gratefully acknowledges an educational grant from Cephalon, Inc., in support of this supplement.