Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia Outcomes in Women After Primary Breast Cancer Treatment: A Randomized, Controlled Trial

Ellyn E. Matthews, PhD, RN, AOCNS®, CBSM, Ann M. Berger, PhD, APRN, AOCNS®, FAAN, Sarah J. Schmiege, PhD, Paul F. Cook, PhD, Michaela S. McCarthy, RN, MS, Camille M. Moore, MS, and Mark S. Aloia, PhD, CBSM

About 30%–50% of women with breast cancer experience insomnia (Savard, Villa, Ivers, Simard, & Morin, 2009), which is twice the rate than in the general population (Berger, 2009). Compared to other cancers, insomnia is more prevalent in women with breast cancer (Palesh et al., 2010; Savard, Ivers, Villa, Caplette-Gingras, & Morin, 2011). For those with cancer, insomnia can affect treatment recovery and quality of survivorship. Women with breast cancer are thrust into early menopause from chemotherapy or endocrine treatments, and report new or worsening insomnia with frequent nocturnal awakenings (Berger, Kuhn, Farr, Von Essen, et al., 2009b). Disrupted sleep has been documented in all phases of the cancer trajectory, including long-term survivorship.

Insomnia is characterized by complaints of difficulty initiating or maintaining sleep, or nonrestorative sleep, lasting for at least one month and causing significant distress or impairment in functioning (Buysse, 2013). Some women are predisposed to insomnia; others report that insomnia was precipitated by the stress of a breast cancer diagnosis and/or treatment. Evidence suggests that insomnia has a consistent negative impact on immune functioning (Blask et al., 2011; Payne, Piper, Rabinowitz, & Zimmerman, 2006) and may even have implications for tumor progression (Filipski et al., 2002, 2003) and survival after a cancer diagnosis (Innominato et al., 2009; Mormont et al., 2000). Breast cancer-related insomnia has been shown to have a profound effect on quality of life (QOL) and daily functioning (Ancoli-Israel et al., 2006; Arndt, Merx, Stegmaier, Ziegler, & Brenner, 2005).

In a population-based sample of patients with differing cancers (N = 991), 31% of the total sample reported insomnia symptoms at the perioperative period, a rate...