

The Usefulness of a Daily Pain Management Diary for Outpatients With Cancer-Related Pain

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Purpose/Objectives: To describe the usefulness of daily pain management diaries to outpatients with cancer who participated in a randomized clinical trial of the PRO-SELF[®] Pain Control Program.

Design: Randomized clinical trial in which a daily pain management diary was used for data collection in the control group and for data collection and nurse coaching regarding the pain management program in the intervention group.

Setting: Seven outpatient oncology settings.

Sample: 155 patients with pain from bone metastases and 90 family caregivers.

Methods: Content and statistical analysis of audiotaped answers to a semistructured questionnaire.

Main Research Variables: Patients' and family caregivers' perceptions of the usefulness of a daily pain management diary; specific ways in which the diary was used.

Findings: Patients in both the intervention (75%) and control groups (73%) found the diary useful. The diary was used to heighten awareness of pain, guide pain management behavior, enhance a sense of control, and facilitate communication. Family caregivers in both groups also reported that the diary was useful.

Conclusions: The completion of a daily pain management diary is useful to patients and family caregivers and may function as an intervention for self-care.

Implications for Nursing: Research-based evidence supports the importance of using a daily pain management diary in clinical practice.

The patient diary is a well-established tool in symptom management research. The subjective and changeable nature of symptoms makes frequent ratings desirable in a wide variety of studies, ranging from descriptions of symptom frequency and severity to randomized clinical trials of intervention protocols. Frequent ratings in a diary minimize recall bias, depict the dynamics of the symptom experience, and produce a dense stream of data for the analysis of symptoms over time (Burman, 1995; Richardson, 1994; Ross, Rideout, & Carson, 1994). Diaries also are useful in clinical practice, particularly in outpatient and homecare settings where direct contact with patients usually is intermittent and nurses must have a valid and reliable way of assessing symptoms between direct patient contacts (Burman; Grant & Rivera, 1995; McCaffery, 1999). In oncology practice, diaries are a central component of pain management (Jacox, Carr,

Key Points . . .

- ▶ Research evidence suggests that daily recording of pain intensity and analgesic intake is a promising component of an educational intervention to improve cancer pain management.
- ▶ Patients and family caregivers found a daily pain management diary useful in self-care for cancer pain.
- ▶ Patients discovered a variety of uses for the daily pain management diary, but additional education and coaching by healthcare professionals are needed to reap the diary's full potential to improve cancer pain management.

Payne, et al., 1994; McCaffery; McGuire, Yarbrow, & Ferrell, 1995; Steering Committee on Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Care and Treatment of Breast Cancer, 1998). Diaries are advocated for pain assessment, identification of pain patterns, and evaluation of interventions, as well as facilitation of communication between patients and healthcare providers (McGuire, 1995; Spross & Burke, 1995).

Despite their usefulness to researchers and clinicians, little is known about whether patients find symptom diaries useful in their own self-care symptom management. The purpose of this study was to describe the usefulness of a daily pain management diary to outpatients with cancer who participated in a randomized clinical trial of a self-care nursing intervention called the PRO-SELF[®] Pain Control Program, developed by

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