Adherence, Sleep, and Fatigue Outcomes After Adjuvant Breast Cancer Chemotherapy: Results of a Feasibility Intervention Study

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Key Points . . .

- Subjects were receptive to continuing their sleep intervention after chemotherapy ended.
- Healthy sleep and wake cycles can be maintained after chemotherapy ends.
- Sleep maintenance problems persisted throughout the first year after beginning adjuvant breast cancer chemotherapy.
- Fatigue levels were in the desired mild range (i.e., less than four); at one-year follow-up, no one reported severe fatigue.

Fatigue is the most frequent and distressing symptom reported in the general population, persistent sleep disturbances, or insomnia, are associated with a higher risk of clinical anxiety and depression (Hajak, 2000). Studies have shown that insomnia adversely affects daytime performance (Morin, 1993), including driving safety (Dement, 1999). In patients with cancer, sleep disturbances have been linked to fatigue, pain, wound healing, immune function, and mental health (Lee, 2001) and have contributed to decreased functional status (Winningham, 1992). Despite these reported associations, little is known about these relationships in cancer survivors.

Increasing numbers of women are being treated with adjuvant chemotherapy and radiation therapy in an attempt to decrease morbidity and mortality from breast cancer (Bach, 2001). In fact, two to three million of the estimated nine million cancer survivors in the United States are women with a history of breast cancer (American Cancer Society, 2003). Fatigue is the most frequent and distressing symptom reported.