Symptom Dimensions as Outcomes in Interventions for Patients With Cancer: A Systematic Review

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PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION: Symptom experience in patients with cancer consists of several dimensions, often measured descriptively within various populations but seldom used as intervention outcomes. This review aims at describing symptom dimensions as outcomes of interventions designed to alleviate symptoms in patients with cancer and to describe these interventions’ effects on at least two symptom dimensions.

LITERATURE SEARCH: The PRISMA statement for reporting systematic reviews was used. Searches were undertaken in various indexing sites.

DATA EVALUATION: Extracted data included design, participants, intervention and control group treatment, targeted symptom dimension, and summary of results.

SYNTHESIS: 2,041 articles were identified and 15 were included. The symptom dimensions were intensity, distress, prevalence, frequency, consequences, and quality. Eleven interventions had significant effect on symptom dimensions, mostly on intensity and distress.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE: Oncology nurses need clinical skills to be able to understand patients’ experiences through their narratives. Various interventions are targeted at symptoms, and these need to be implemented to provide evidence-based symptom management.

KEYWORDS symptom experience; patients with cancer; symptom dimensions; symptom intensity; symptom distress

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