Patterns of Fatigue and Effect of Exercise in Patients Receiving Chemotherapy for Breast Cancer

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Key Points...

➤ Cancer-related fatigue (CRF) peaks in the days immediately after IV chemotherapy and declines gradually over time.
➤ Exercise has an impact on levels of CRF.
➤ Fatigue patterns vary depending on the type of chemotherapy regimen patients receive.

Cancer-related fatigue (CRF) is a significant and highly prevalent clinical problem. It is long lasting and characterized by a significant temporal variability. The symptom often is not continually present but comes and goes in a somewhat roller coaster fashion (Berger, 1998). CRF affects all aspects of patients’ lives and decreases quality of life. Although fatigue is one of the most impairing cancer-related symptoms, it has not been controlled fully. The unknown mechanisms and the fluctuating nature of CRF add to obstacles in studying and managing this symptom.

Patterns of Fatigue in Patients Receiving Chemotherapy

CRF fluctuates over time and peaks in the days immediately after IV chemotherapy administration. Richardson, Ream, and Wilson-Barnett (1998) revealed that patients with cancer who were treated by conventional three- or four-week regimens reported high levels of fatigue for the first four to five days after chemotherapy. Fatigue decreased steadily in subsequent days until around day 15, when a temporary...