Lymphoma is one of the malignant diseases in which more effective treatments are leading to steady progress in improving survival rates, therefore increasing the number of patients living with active disease or in remission. Lymphomas are a heterogeneous group of malignancies that originate from the lymphoid system with frequent bone marrow involvement (Diehl & Fuchs, 2007; Evans & Hancock, 2003), making the disease trajectory more uncertain than is usual in patients with solid tumors (Elphee, 2008). The most common forms of lymphoma include two types of non-Hodgkin lymphoma (NHL), large B-cell and follicular lymphomas and Hodgkin disease. To date, no effective methods are available for lymphoma screening. Instead, patients are identified only after they develop lymphadenopathy or other disease-related symptoms. Depending on the specific histology and morphology, disease progression can vary from being relatively slow to quite aggressive. In addition, survival time and cure rates vary among lymphomas (Diehl & Fuchs, 2007; Evans & Hancock, 2003). Because of this heterogeneity, a variety of active treatment alternatives as well as “wait and watch” strategies are used. However, when patients require treatment, therapy often is intensive, generally with major systemic effects.

Although signs and symptoms of lymphoma, such as lymphadenopathy and systemic B-symptoms (i.e., fever, night sweats, and weight loss) are well recognized in the diagnostic process, surprisingly little empirical research is available on the symptom experience of patients with lymphoma undergoing treatment. Since 2000, numerous researchers have begun to elucidate theories of symptom experience (Armstrong, 2003), although a lack of consensus in definitions still exists. For example, in their now classic definition, Rhodes and Watson (1987) described symptoms as “subjective phenomena regarded by individuals as an indication of a condition departing from normal functions, sensation, or appearance” (p. 242). The broad concept of symptom experience often is described as multidimensional, with Rhodes and...