Feasibility of a Patient-Controlled Cognitive-Behavioral Intervention for Pain, Fatigue, and Sleep Disturbance in Cancer

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Improvements in cancer treatment have allowed people diagnosed with advanced (recurrent or metastatic) disease to live longer; however, these patients experience a heavy symptom burden. Patients with advanced cancer often report experiencing up to five symptoms at a given time and significantly more when receiving chemotherapy or radiation therapy (Chang, Hwang, Feuerman, & Kasimis, 2000; Feyer, Kleeberg, Steingräber, Günther, & Behrens, 2008). Researchers have identified co-occurring pain, fatigue, and sleep disturbance as a common symptom cluster among people with advanced cancer (Beck, Dudley, & Barsevick, 2005; Hoffman, Given, von Eye, Gift, & Given, 2007). Because the science regarding symptom clusters is new, few treatments that target co-occurring symptoms have been investigated. One logical option is to test interventions that have been effective for each of the cluster component symptoms when experienced in isolation. Evidence supports cognitive and behavioral strategies such as relaxation, distraction, and imagery for each of the three component symptoms (Kwekkeboom, Cherwin, Lee, & Wanta, 2009). The purpose of this study was to evaluate the feasibility and initial efficacy of a patient-controlled cognitive-behavioral intervention for managing pain, fatigue, and sleep disturbance during treatment for advanced cancer.

Background

Symptom Clusters

Patients with cancer often experience multiple symptoms (Potter, Hami, Bryan, & Quigley, 2003; Saini et al., 2006; Teunissen, de Graeff, Voest, & de Haes, 2007), and as oncology specialists working with particular groups of patients may notice, certain symptoms tend to occur together. Symptoms such as nausea and vomiting have...