A Pilot Study of Activity Engagement in the First Six Months After Stem Cell Transplantation

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Objective: To describe the natural pace and pattern of activity resumption in the first six months after stem cell transplantation (SCT).

Design: Longitudinal, descriptive survey.

Setting: Bone marrow transplantation program of a National Cancer Institute–designated comprehensive cancer center in the northeastern United States.

Sample: 18 men and 18 women who underwent either autologous (83%) or allogeneic (17%) transplantation.

Methods: Participants were surveyed 30 days, 100 days, and six months after SCT. Descriptive statistics were followed by exploratory linear mixed modeling with factors of time, gender, and the interaction between time and gender.

Main Research Variables: A modified checklist version of the Activity Card Sort was used to measure activity retention.

Findings: Participants generally were performing 49% of their usual activities 30 days after transplantation, 70% of their usual activities 100 days after transplantation, and 77% of their usual activities six months after transplantation. Level of activity engagement increased over time, with the greatest changes observed from 30–100 days after SCT. Men retained more of their activities than women in the domains of low physical-demand leisure and social activities.

Conclusions: Rehabilitation screening may be most helpful in the period from 100 days to six months, when activity levels begin to plateau. Activity recovery may differ for men and women; future research should explore how this could affect rehabilitation needs.

Implications for Nursing: Nurses can use structured surveys to explore and promote patients’ satisfaction with and ability to engage in daily activities and ensure appropriate referrals to rehabilitation during recovery from SCT.

of both samples did not endorse the statements of recovery at that time point. Lee et al. (2001) concluded that, although their data contained many encouraging reports of recovery, such as few reports of bothersome symptoms, a substantial proportion of participants did not feel that their lives, routines, and activities had returned to normal one year after transplantation.