The Validity of Neuropathy and Neuropathic Pain Measures in Patients With Cancer Receiving Taxanes and Platinums

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Chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy (CIPN) is a common and distressing side effect experienced by patients receiving neurotoxic chemotherapeutic agents (Armstrong, Almadrones, & Gilbert, 2005; Bakitas, 2007; Sweeney, 2002; Visovsky, 2003; Wickham, 2007). Cumulative chemotherapy dosage, as well as preexisting neuropathy, are well-established CIPN risk factors (Hausheer, Schilsky, Bain, Berghorn, & Lieberman, 2006; Ocean & Vahdat, 2004; Verstappen, Heimans, Hoekman, & Postma, 2003). For example, neuropathy can occur in patients with diabetes, HIV infection, degenerative or familial neurologic disorders known to cause peripheral neuropathy, paraneoplastic neuropathy, alcohol abuse, vitamin B deficiency, and peripheral vascular disease (Hausheer et al., 2006). To minimize CIPN risk, administration of neurotoxic agents to patients with these conditions is avoided when possible. Severe CIPN symptoms can necessitate chemotherapy dose reductions, negatively affecting cancer treatment efficacy. In addition, CIPN-related neuropathic pain and adverse effects on functional status and quality of life (QOL) can extend well beyond the completion of chemotherapy treatment, leading to chronic suffering for many cancer survivors (Elderly Lung Cancer Vinorelbine Italian Study Group, 1999; Ostchega, Donohue, & Fox, 1988; Wampler et al., 2006). Despite these negative outcomes, research investigating new ways to prevent, minimize, or reverse established CIPN has been impeded because reliable and valid ways to measure CIPN have not been fully developed. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to report the findings of a research study designed to evaluate the validity of several CIPN measurement approaches.

Background

Comprehensive assessment of subjective and objective neurologic components, inclusive of tendon reflexes, strength, pin and vibration sensibility, and nerve conduction studies, is the gold standard approach to neuropathy evaluation (England et al., 2005). Quantification of neuropathy severity can be accomplished via use of composite instruments where individual neurologic