The purpose of this article is to describe information that is necessary to develop and use a preparatory intervention guided by self-regulation theory (Johnson, Fieler, Jones, Wlasowicz, & Mitchell, 1997; Johnson, Fieler, Wlasowicz, Mitchell, & Jones, 1997) for women undergoing radiation therapy for cancer of the cervix or uterus. Self-regulation theory asserts that cognitive schemata, or mental images, of stressful experiences (e.g., undergoing radiation therapy for cancer) guide coping efforts (Johnson, 1996; Johnson, Lauver, & Nail, 1989; Leventhal & Johnson, 1983). Focusing on the more objective aspects of the experience helps patients select and use coping strategies that enable them to regain or maintain more of their usual activities.

A number of randomized trials have demonstrated the efficacy (Lohr, 1988) of concrete, objective information in helping patients maintain or regain usual activities. Patient descriptions of the typical sensations or symptoms associated with specific healthcare events are necessary to develop appropriate preparatory concrete, objective information messages for use in clinical practice.

Evaluation of published sensation or symptom descriptions for use in developing concrete, objective information for a specific practice setting requires making judgments about the similarity of patient populations and treatment protocols, as well as the feasibility of implementation and the expected outcomes.