Cancer-related fatigue (CRF) is the most common and distressing side effect of cancer treatment. This fatigue has a profound effect on patients’ ability to perform activities of daily living. As the evidence for exercise in the prevention and management of CRF has grown since the 1990s, oncology nurses and healthcare professionals are challenged to integrate exercise interventions for patients with cancer. Effective management of CRF through strategies such as exercise can affect the multidimensional experience of fatigue and improve patients’ functional status and quality of life (QOL). This article is a review and summary of the current state of the evidence on exercise as an intervention for CRF. This clinically relevant synthesis facilitates application to nursing practice and identifies directions for future research needed to address gaps in current knowledge.

Definitions

CRF is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by physical, psychological, and other diverse factors. CRF is defined by the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) as “a persistent, subjective sense of tiredness related to cancer or cancer treatment that interferes with usual functioning” (Mock et al., 2003).