



Research article

Exploring patient's perceptions of cancer chemotherapy side effects

Wesam Abdel-Razaq^{1*}, Mohammed Alzahrani¹, Rami Bustami¹, Yousef Alolah², Mohammed Almutlag¹

¹King Abdullah International Medical Research Center, King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences, College of Pharmacy, Ministry of National Guard Health Affairs, Riyadh 11481, Saudi Arabia.

²Pharmaceutical Care Department, King Abdulaziz Medical City, Ministry of National Guard Health Affairs, Riyadh 11426, Saudi Arabia.

Key words: Cancer; Chemotherapy; Side effects; Fatigue; Perceptions.

***Corresponding Author: Wesam S. Abdel-Razaq,** King Abdullah International Medical Research Center, King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences, College of Pharmacy, Ministry of National Guard Health Affairs, Riyadh 11481, Saudi Arabia.

Abstract

Cancer chemotherapy has been always associated with a bad reputation among healthcare providers, patients and their families mainly due to their associated side effects. The objectives of the present study were to identify and rank the incidence of the most disturbing cancer chemotherapy side effects and to assess patient's perceptions of these side effects as the treatment progresses. A cross-sectional interview-based survey was conducted in the Medical Oncology Outpatient clinic at King Abdulaziz Medical City, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The sample size realized as 100 participants and they reported mucositis, nausea or vomiting and fatigue as the most troubling side effects followed by hair loss, dry mouth, unpleasant taste and constipation. However, the rank of these side effects changed as they proceeded through their treatments. The majority of the disturbing side effects significantly diminished in most patients. However, fatigue significantly increased as the chemotherapy progressed, which could limit the participants' ability to work or perform everyday activities of life. Although most of the participants expressed a high level of satisfaction of the quality of information they received prior to their cancer treatment, they were concerned about the distressing nature of the treatment and the potential deterioration in their quality of life due to the chemotherapy side effects. It is therefore important to improve the communication between health-care providers and patients to identify those side effects of concern to patients to reduce their expected burden and ultimately succeed in achieving the cancer therapy outcome.