

# The Impact of Methods of Information on Chemotherapy-Related Side Effects: A Critical Review

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A systematic review of the literature regarding the effectiveness of various methods of information given to patients with cancer receiving chemotherapy education revealed that psycho-educational interventions minimized the intensity and impact of treatment-related fatigue on daily life in the short term for patients undergoing chemotherapy. Studies that investigated efficacy of interactive multimedia devices revealed no statistical improvement in information recall, quantity of self-care activities, and fatigue levels between groups. Three of the multimedia studies focused on anxiety and depression trends before and during treatment, with mixed results. Several studies revealed no significant difference in either anxiety or depression. Others concluded that patients who viewed video information in conjunction with standard care were less anxious and depressed. Combined, these studies revealed that multimedia devices did not improve recall of information and that psycho-educational interventions were able to improve the impact of treatment-related side effects, namely fatigue, in the short term. This suggests that the educational needs of patients with cancer require a complex series of factors that impact the individual's ability to understand how and when to initiate recommended self-care strategies.

A diagnosis of cancer can elicit a range of emotions and feelings that can cause significant anxiety and depression for patients and their support networks (McCaughan & McKenna, 2006; Mills & Sullivan, 1999). One of the prominent coping strategies that patients with cancer use to lessen anxiety is seeking out information (McCaughan & McKenna, 2006; Van der Molen, 2001). Education needs of patients with cancer require health professionals to take into consideration an aging population, financial challenges, cultural diversity, and linguistic and literary barriers (Treacy & Mayer, 2000). Promotion and understanding of treatment and sufficient knowledge to initiate self-care strategies to lessen their impact, particularly in the older adult population, are believed to be among the top challenges in oncology nursing today and in the future (Goodman & Riley, 1997).

The patient's need and wish to be provided information in regard to diagnosis and any risks, benefits, and impacts of the proposed treatment are important (Cox, Jenkins, Catt, Langridge, & Fallowfield, 2006). However, the reality of supplying timely and appropriate information for patients with cancer is of concern for patients and healthcare providers worldwide (Mills & Sullivan, 1999).

## Background

Educating and supporting patients with cancer, particularly patients who are having chemotherapy, are regarded as two of

### At a Glance

- ◆ Reviewing the current literature regarding prechemotherapy education highlights the complexities of supplying effective and sustainable benefits.
- ◆ Multimedia devices were beneficial when used as an adjunct to traditional education sessions.
- ◆ Reviewed supportive educational programs were able to show short-term improvements in select side effects, namely fatigue.

the most important tasks carried out by oncology nurses (Ireland, DePalma, Arneson, Stark, & Williamson, 2004). Patients being informed and proactive in their own care because of information supplied by nursing staff is, unfortunately, not guaranteed (Dodd & Miaskowski, 2000). Reaching this desired goal can be problematic, particularly when patients receive treatment every two to four weeks in an outpatient setting and are expected to learn and

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