Cancer Related Fatigue

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Fatigue

Cancer-related fatigue is a distressing, persistent, subjective sense of physical, emotional and/or cognitive tiredness or exhaustion related to cancer or cancer treatment that is not proportional to recent activity and interferes with usual functioning.
• Most common complaint of cancer patients.
• Most distressing symptom reported.
• Up to 30% of cancer survivors report fatigue years after completion of treatment.
• Often patients are unprepared for this symptom.
Cancer-related fatigue correlates with:

• Decreased daytime activity
• Increased nocturnal wakefulness
Medical Conditions Causing Fatigue

- Uncontrolled diabetes
- Thyroid disorders
- Heart disease
- Lung disease
- Rheumatologic disorders and many others
Sleep Disorders in Cancer Patients

- Approximately 30% to 88% of cancer patients have sleep disorders.
- Lack of sleep is associated with depression, anxiety, decreased cognitive function, an impaired immune system, and reduced quality of life.

- Poor sleep can last far beyond cancer treatment.
- Sleep apnea is more common among cancer patients than the general population.
- Cancer patients are twice as likely as people without cancer to experience insomnia.
Evaluation of the Fatigued Patient

• History
  ❖ Includes complete medication list

• Physical Examination

• Diagnostic laboratory evaluation

• Measurement of fatigue, pain, depression, anxiety, sleep disturbance
# Fatigue Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fatigue Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>None to mild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-10</td>
<td>Severe</td>
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In-depth fatigue assessment:

- Onset, pattern, duration
- Change over time
- Associated or alleviating factors
- Interference with function
UT MDACC CRF Clinic

- Started in 1998 – Multidisciplinary Effort
- Dedicated to evaluating and treating cancer related fatigue
- Dr. Carmen Escalante and Dr. Ellen Manzullo
- Internal/External Patients
- Comprehensive Evaluation

Fatigue Clinic
Location: Mays Clinic, 6th Floor
713-563-7100
## CRF Clinic Assessment Packet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Tool Name</th>
<th>Entity Assessed</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brief Fatigue Inventory (BFI)</td>
<td>Fatigue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief Pain Inventory</td>
<td>Pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beck Depression Inventory II (BDI – II)</td>
<td>Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient-Generated Objective Global Assessment of Nutrition (PG-SGA)</td>
<td>Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief Sleep Disturbance Scale (BSDS)</td>
<td>Sleeping habits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.D. Anderson Cancer-Related Symptom Inventory (MDASI)</td>
<td>Multiple cancer-related symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Status Index (FSI)</td>
<td>Physical function or mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SF-12 Health Survey Standard Scoring</td>
<td>Patient opinions on his/her health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beck Anxiety Inventory</td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eppworth Sleepiness Scale</td>
<td>Sleep</td>
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</table>
Cancer related fatigue frequently has several causes in an individual patient.
Optimize the treatment of any existing medical condition
Reversible causes of fatigue

- Anemia
- Hypothyroidism
- Sleep apnea
- Other poorly controlled medical conditions (i.e., heart disease, diabetes)
Obstructive Sleep Apnea Treatment:

Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP/BiPAP)
Treatment

**Depression**
- It has been found that depression correlates with the degree of fatigue in cancer patients.
- Some patients benefit from antidepressants.
- Exercise can also have a positive effect on depression.

**Pain**
- What is the severity of the pain?
- Prescription of medication to alleviate the pain
- Possible referral to Pain Clinic
Prescribed Stimulants

- Methylphenidate
- Modafinil
- Armodafinil

*The use of these medications will have to be discussed with your physician after a full medical examination.*
General Strategies

- Energy Conservation
  - Set priorities
  - Pace yourself
  - Delegate chores

- Schedule activities at times of peak energy
Energy Conservation

- Postpone nonessential activities
- Naps that do not disrupt night-time sleep
- Structured daily routine
- Attend to one activity at a time
Exercise

• Exercise may improve a patient’s functional performance, thus decreasing fatigue.

• An exercise program should be individualized for each patient.

• A good goal is 30 minutes of exercise 5 days per week.
Walking

- Walking is one of the best forms of exercise for cancer patients for several reasons.
  - Safe, convenient, cheap, stimulates energy, maintains balance & mobility, major component of ADL
Good Sleep Hygiene

• Set a constant sleep schedule
  ❖ Go to bed at the same time and wake up at the same time.

• Regular bed time rituals
  ❖ Same activity every night before bedtime like a warm bath, listen to music, reading an inspirational book.

• Get regular exercise
  ❖ At least 2 hours before bedtime.

• Healthy Diet
  ❖ Avoid large meals before bedtime. A small snack tends to promote sleep.
Good Sleep Hygiene

- Limit Caffeine
  - Limit intake to less than 2 servings per day and don’t drink after noon.

- Avoid Nicotine
  - Tobacco users who stop smoking are able to fall asleep faster and sleep better once withdrawal symptoms subside.

- Avoid alcohol 4 to 6 hours before bedtime.
- Limit afternoon naps to less than 30 minutes.
- Use your bedroom for sleep only.
Relaxation & Self Hypnosis

- New alternative therapy for the treatment of fatigue
- Provides: tranquility, less pain, concentration, hope, healing, love oneself, etc.
Nutrition

- Efforts to improve or maintain nutrition can decrease or prevent fatigue.
- Minimize gastrointestinal side effects of cancer treatment: nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.
• All cancer patients should be educated about cancer-related fatigue with respect to their cancer treatment.

• Fatigue does not necessarily mean the cancer has gotten worse or has recurred.
What about our caregivers?

Tips:

• Take some quality time for yourself: schedule off a day at home
• Watch for signs of stress
• Don’t be afraid to ask or accept help from friends
• Use resources
• Ventilate your feelings
Resources

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