

Pain and symptoms

Survivorship series

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- Completing treatment can be exciting and stressful. All is well – or is it?
- Once treatment is over, many cancer survivors find they have issues and concerns they did not expect.

Living and Coping Post Treatment

- Aftereffects are physical, emotional and practical changes that happen after cancer treatment has been completed
- Not all cancer survivors will experience aftereffects
- Some examples: Surgery, chemo, radiotherapy
- Fatigue, scars, physical changes, anxiety, depression, challenges with employment/health insurance.

Physical Symptoms

- Pain
- Fatigue
- Constipation
- Nausea and vomiting
- Breathlessness
- Cough
- Hiccups
- Sore/dry mouth
- Wound/skin care
- Itch
- Poor appetite
- Diarrhea
- Edema
- Insomnia
- Neuropathy
- Anxiety/Depression

Principles of Analgesia

- Awareness of analgesic ladder principle and need for around the clock dosing to avoid ‘chasing the pain’
- No evidence for multiple opioid prescribing
- Use co-analgesics and adjuvants (e.g steroids, NSAIDS, Marijuana, antidepressants)
 - Not all pain is opioid/narcotic responsive
- Remember routine laxatives if on routine analgesics

Neuropathy (pharmalogical)

- Non steroidal anti-inflammatories
- Neurontin
- Lyrica
- Lidocaine patch
- Anti-depressants
- Capsaicin cream

Neuropathy (alternative)

- Evening Primrose Oil
- Vitamins B1, B12, E
- Fish oil
- Amino acids
- Curcumin
- Geranium Oil
- L.Carnitine (found in Peanut butter)

Continued

- Physiotherapy
- Exercise (improve circulation)
- Accupuncture
- TENS machine
- Reflexology

Pain

- Report new or different pain
- Long term or constant pain
- Pain that continues after treatment
- Pain or swelling in arm or leg
- Pain, tingling, numbness in hands or feet

Fatigue

- One of the main symptom complaints during and after active treatment (especially post chemo, bone marrow transplant, certain medications, radiotherapy)
- Usually resolves within first 6 months after treatment
- Sometimes physical (Anemia, changes in hormones, immune function, inactivity, chronic pain)
- Sometimes emotional (stress, worry, frustration, depression)

Fatigue

- Most common symptom in medicine
- Lack of energy, tiredness
- Subjective weakness
- Diminished mental capacity
- Not relieved by rest
- May be incapacitating

Treatment of Fatigue

- Non-pharmacologic therapy
 - Patient/family education: Permission to be tired
 - Energy conservation strategies
 - Exercise
- Pharmacologic therapy
 - Low dose Dexamethasone (steroid)
 - Methylphenidate
 - Antidepressant trial (SSRI)

Emotional and Practical

- Living with uncertainty/worry
- Fear of recurrence
- Anxiety and depression
- Behavior changes
- Relationship changes
- Diet and exercise changes
- Fertility worries
- Employment issues
- Financial worries
- Lifestyle change

Common Emotions

- Anger
- Fear
- Sadness or depression
- Anxiety
- Uncertainty about the future
- Concerns about pain or fatigue
- Concerns about body image
- Concerns about relationships (cancer effects all family members)

Anxiety

- **Psychological**

- Apprehension

- Inability to distract

- Depersonalization

- Indecisiveness

- Intrusive thoughts of death

- Irritability

- Persistently tense

- Unable to relax

- Poor concentration

Anxiety

- **Physical**

Nervous system – Headache, tremor, fatigue, dizziness, panic attacks, leg weakness

GI – Nausea, dry mouth, dysphagia, anorexia, indigestion, diarrhea

Cardiovascular – Chest pain, palpitations

Respiratory – Hyperventilation, yawning, sighing

Genitourinary – Frequency, urgency, impotence

Skin – Rash, sweating

Causes of heightened anxiety

- Situational - fear Hospital/treatment/finances
- Psychological – guilt fear of pain, future, death
- Uncontrolled symptoms- pain, insomnia, dyspnea, weakness, nausea
- Drugs – Side effects, withdrawal

Pharmacological Treatment

- Benzodiazepines: Lorazepam, Diazepam
- Anti-depressants: Help anxiety and panic attacks

Non-pharmacological

- Counselling –Individual, family or support group
- Hypnotherapy, music, art, relaxation, massage, accupressure, visualization and other complimentary therapies

Etiology - Insomnia

Sleeping during the day/mixed up cycle

Wakeful stimuli

Anxiety/depression

Unrelieved pain or other symptoms (dyspnea, itch, incontinence, restless legs)

Drugs – Alcohol, caffeine, diuretics, steroids

Insomnia Management

- Correct the correctable.
- Good pain and symptom control.
- Modify drugs (medication common cause)
- Usual advice – stick to same bed times and wake times, avoid stimulants, relaxation techniques

Medication

- Night sedation should be avoided unless insomnia severe, disabling or distressing
- Temazepam, Trazodone
- Try over the counter 'Unisom'/Benadryl/Melatonin first?
- Low dose Haloperidol if distressing bad dreams/nightmares (also an anti-emetic)

Monitoring Your Health

- Keep a written record of symptoms and discuss with healthcare team
- Ask questions. Research if you don't understand something
- Get a treatment plan for follow up and screening tests
- Obtain information about after effects of your type of cancer e.g. Hormone therapy
- Share important information with loved ones and healthcare providers
- Support Groups
- Rehab resources for : fatigue, weakness(physio, lymphedema)

- Its easy to obsess about every ache and pain if your'e worried about cancer returning. There are only a few major symptoms that could mean serious problems
- There are illnesses and other medical problems. You can still get... coughs, colds, infections, arthritis, heart problems, just like anyone else

What should I look for?

- Return of original symptoms you had before (lump or growth where cancer first started)
- New or unusual pain that does not go away
- Weight loss without trying
- Bleeding/unexplained bruising
- Fevers
- Breathlessness
- Blood in stools or urine
- Nausea/vomiting/diarrhea/loss of appetite/trouble swallowing
- Persistent cough
- Increased headaches

Follow up medical care questions

- Should I tell the doctor about symptoms that worry me?
- Which doctors should I see after treatment? And how often?
- What tests do I need?
- What can we do about pain, fatigue or other issues?
- How long will it take until I recover, I am back to normal or feel like myself again?

- Is there anything I can do to stop the cancer from coming back?
- What support is there?
- Do I need to make lifestyle changes?
- Discussing family issues, lack of understanding, changes in relationships....

Rehab

- Cancer rehabilitation helps obtain the best physical, social, psychological and work related functioning during and after cancer treatment. The goal of rehabilitation is to help a person regain control over many aspects of their lives

- Rehab Medicine (Physiatry)
- Physical therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Lymphedema therapy
- Recreational (arts)
- Speech and language
- Prosthetics
- Dietician

Rehab

- Your attendance today is 'part of Rehab'
- Support groups/education sessions
- Social Work/counseling
- Nursing/Navigators
- Nutrition
- Pain and symptom management

Moving Forward

- Journal
- Record symptoms
- Regular follow up
- Talking about your journey (friends, family)
- Support groups (Others in similar position, so you don't feel alone)
- Cancer center groups/therapies/yoga/wellness

Learning More

- Livestrong.com
- Cancer.gov/cancertopics/coping/life-after-treatment
- American Cancer Society