

Evaluation of side effects in cancer patients during oncological care

A project of the supportive care group Tumour Centre Berlin / Germany



Schelenz C¹, Feyer P², Steiner U³, Bangemann N⁴, Kurz S⁵, Rudolph C⁶, Jagota A⁷

¹Subspecialized practice Hematology/Oncology, Berlin; ²Department of Radiotherapy, Radiooncology and Nuclear Medicine, Vivantes Neukölln, Berlin; ³ Department of Urology, Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Campus Benjamin Franklin, Berlin; ⁴Breast Center Charité, Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Campus Benjamin Franklin, Berlin; ⁵ Department of Pneumology, Evangelische Lungenklinik Berlin; ⁶ Medical Clinic II - Centre of Gastroenterology, Hematology/Oncology, DRK Kliniken Köpenick, Berlin; ⁷Tumour Centre Berlin e.V., Berlin

Objective:

The therapeutic options in tumour treatment protocols include a maximum of tumour cell reduction and at the same time a minimum of side effects in order to secure a good quality of life for the cancer patient. Temporary side effects have been accepted in relation to the benefit risk calculation.

A questionnaire for cancer patients was developed to improve the management of side effects of the cancer treatment, to optimize the patient - doctor - communication and to register individual problems of the patient.

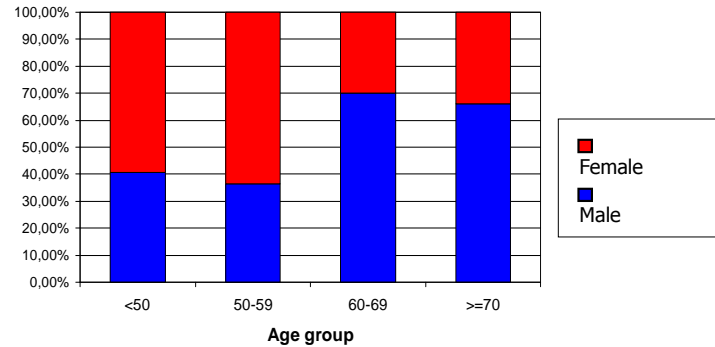
Methods:

Cancer patients received a questionnaire with 25 items and were asked for their problems during or after the last tumour specific treatment before having the consultation with the doctor. Gender, age, Karnofsky-index and treatment protocol were additional registered.

During September 2007 until December 2007 a total of 272 questionnaires could be collected.

The qualitative items have been evaluated with the contingency table method and the parameter free x² test (Chi-Square-Test).

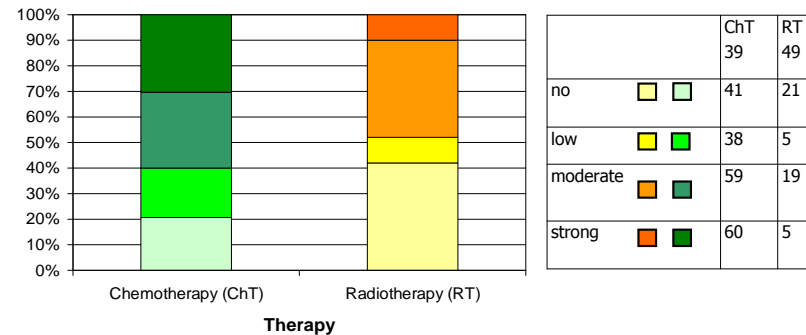
Distribution of Population by Age-Group and Sex



Results:

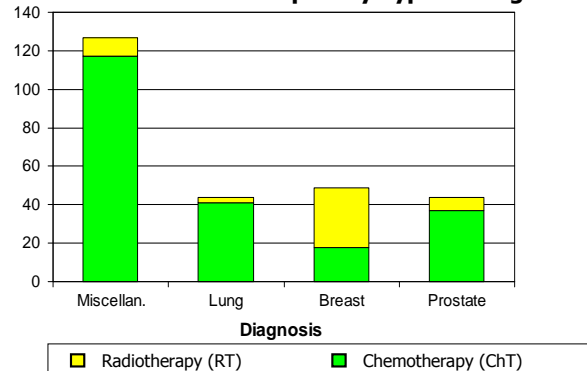
The questionnaire has been accepted very well by the patients. More than 50% of the patients documented additional important points influencing their well being. Nearly all of the evaluated patients had some tumour therapy specific side effects. The most pronounced problem was the physical exhaustion in 71% of the evaluated patients. More than 50% were influenced in their quality of life by more than normal fatigue since the start of their tumour specific therapy. Significant differences could be evaluated in relation to the age, diagnosis and tumour therapy with respect to the symptoms.

Fast Physical Exhaustion related to Therapy

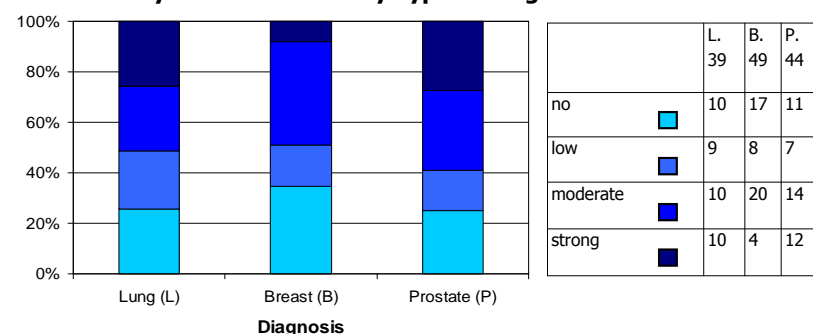


Symptom	Moderate to severe problem
Physical exhaustion	70,50%
More than normal fatigue	52,60%
Sweating	49,30%
Hair loss	46,70%
Dyspnoe	45,30%
Pain in the muscles	42,30%
Paresthesia hands or feets	39,30%
Taste loss	38,20%
Appetit loss	36,50%
Neurocognitive deficits	36,10%
Nausea	34,20%
Diarrhoe	30,60%
Nail or skin impairment	26,90%
Chest pain	26,50%
Obstipation	24,60%

Distribution of Therapies by Type of Diagnosis



Fast Physical Exhaustion by Type of Diagnosis



Conclusion:

The questionnaire was a good method to improve the communication between the patient and the doctor. It was easier to point out individual problems for the patient. The care givers can focus more precisely on important side effects of the tumour specific therapy in order to improve the quality of life of the patient.