

**Impact of cancer-related fatigue on the lives of patients: new findings from the fatigue coalition.**

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**Abstract:**

**Purpose:** This survey was designed to confirm the prevalence and duration of fatigue in the cancer population and to assess its physical, mental, social, and economic impacts on the lives of patients and caregivers.

**Patients and methods:** A 25-minute telephone interview was completed with 379 cancer patients having a prior history of chemotherapy. Patients were recruited from a sample of 6,125 households in the United States identified as having a member with cancer. The median patient age was 62 years, and 79% of respondents were women. Patients reporting fatigue at least a few times a month were asked a series of questions to better describe their fatigue and its impact on quality of life.

**Results:** Seventy-six percent of patients experienced fatigue at least a few days each month during their most recent chemotherapy; 30% experienced fatigue on a daily basis. Ninety-one percent of those who experienced fatigue reported that it prevented a "normal" life, and 88% indicated that fatigue caused an alteration in their daily routine. Fatigue made it more difficult to participate in social activities and perform typical cognitive tasks. Of the 177 patients who were employed, 75% changed their employment status as a result of fatigue. Furthermore, 65% of patients indicated that their fatigue resulted in their caregivers taking at least one day (mean 4.5 days) off work in a typical month. Physicians were the health care professionals most commonly consulted (79%) to discuss fatigue. Bed rest/ relaxation was the most common treatment recommendation (37%); 40% of patients were not offered any recommendations.

**Conclusions:** Cancer-related fatigue is common among cancer patients who have received chemotherapy and results in substantial adverse physical, psychosocial, and economic consequences for both patients and caregivers. Given the impact of fatigue, treatment options should be routinely considered in the care of patients with cancer.

**Comments:**Strengths:

1. Good sample size
2. High response rate

Weaknesses:

1. Majority of patients were females with breast cancer.
2. No reference to validity and reliability of questionnaire.
3. Study population appears to be under some form of active disease-centered treatment. This limits the possibility of generalization to palliative care.

Relevance to palliative care:

Fatigue is one of the symptoms frequently experienced by palliative care patients, with a significant impact on their quality of life.