

Fatigue in ambulatory patients with advanced lung cancer: prevalence, correlated factors, and screening.

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Abstract:

Although it has been indicated that patients with lung cancer experience higher level of fatigue than patients with other cancers, few published studies have focused on the characteristics of this fatigue and how it interferes with daily activities. The purpose of this study was to clarify fatigue prevalence and the factors correlated with fatigue, and to develop a screening method for fatigue in patients with advanced lung cancer. One hundred fifty-seven patients completed two fatigue scales (Cancer Fatigue Scale [CFS], and fatigue had interfered with any of 7 areas of daily activities. Fifty-nine percent of patients had experienced clinical fatigue, which was defined as fatigue that interfered with any daily activities. Logistic regression analysis demonstrated that symptoms of dyspnea on walking, appetite loss, and depression were significant correlated factors. Both CFS and FNS were found to have sufficient sensitivity and specificity for use as a screening tool. The results indicated that fatigue is a frequent and important symptom, which is associated with both physical and psychological distress in this population. The CFS and FNS were confirmed to have sufficient screening ability.

Comments:

Strengths/uniqueness: The authors had a clear definition of fatigue and used a validated instrument (Cancer Fatigue Scale) as one of their assessments.

Weakness: This was a select population because of their lung cancer diagnosis and also because they were all ambulatory. However, it is likely that in the case of patients who had greater physical impairment, fatigue is an even greater problem.

Relevance to Palliative Care: This study clearly highlights the high prevalence of fatigue in an ambulatory population of advanced lung cancer patients. Given that patients with fatigue are more susceptible to the burden of assessment instruments, this study has provided some validation for the Fatigue Numerical Scale as a screening instrument. The relationship of fatigue with appetite and depression clearly warrants further exploration.