The Impact of Chemotherapy-Induced Cognitive Impairment on the Psychosocial Adjustment of Patients With Nonmetastatic Colorectal Cancer

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Colorectal cancer is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer in Canada. Chemotherapy often is used as treatment for colorectal cancer, and studies have documented cognitive changes in patients after chemotherapy treatment. What remains unclear is the impact of such changes on a person’s roles and relationships, herein referred to as psychosocial adjustment. The purpose of this research was to explore group differences in psychosocial adjustment and chemotherapy-induced cognitive impairment in patients with colorectal cancer. Participants were assessed cross-sectionally, at various time points along their treatment trajectory, using the Psychosocial Adjustment to Illness Scale–Self-Report (PAIS-SR) and the Cambridge Neuropsychological Test Automated Battery (CANTAB). A statistically nonsignificant negative association was indicated between PAIS-SR and CANTAB results, indicating that they would have no meaning in a clinical context. No differences between groups were observed in terms of cognitive ability; however, patients who completed chemotherapy appeared to be at a higher risk for psychosocial maladjustment. This study suggests that cognitive changes do not influence patients’ relationships and functional roles, as indicated from the PAIS-SR.