A Nursing Intervention for Reducing Symptom Burden During Chemotherapy

Annemarie Coolbrandt, RN, PhD, Hans Wildiers, MD, PhD, Annouschka Laenen, PhD, Bert Aertgeerts, MD, PhD, Bernadette Dierckx de Casterlé, RN, PhD, Theo van Achterberg, RN, PhD, and Koen Milisen, RN, PhD

OBJECTIVES: To evaluate the efficacy of an individually tailored nursing intervention for reducing chemotherapy-related symptom distress in adult patients with cancer.

SAMPLE & SETTING: A control group (n = 71) received usual care and an intervention group (n = 72) received usual care and the CHEMO-SUPPORT intervention, all at the University Hospitals of Leuven in Belgium.

METHODS & VARIABLES: The intervention effect was evaluated by measuring the difference in outcomes between the two groups. The primary outcome, overall symptom distress, and other symptom-related outcomes were self-reported at the start of treatment (baseline) and at 3, 6, and 12 weeks.

RESULTS: The CHEMO-SUPPORT intervention showed significantly less worsening of overall symptom distress and severity. Self-efficacy and outcome expectations (measured at six weeks) were significantly higher in the intervention group. Self-care (measured at 12 weeks) was statistically similar between the two groups. The results emphasize the importance of nurses in coaching patients to adequately self-manage their symptoms at home.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING: Providing goal-directed self-management support using motivational interviewing as well as tailoring are promising areas for reducing chemotherapy-related symptom distress.

KEYWORDS chemotherapy; nursing intervention; self-management; symptom management

ONF. 45(1), 115–128.

DOI 10.1188/18.ONF.115-128