Epoetin Alfa: Current and Future Indications and Nursing Implications

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Cancer-related anemia commonly is associated with fatigue and decreased quality of life (QOL). Treatment to achieve optimal hemoglobin levels in patients receiving chemotherapy can alleviate common symptoms of anemia and may allow patients to have more meaningful survival time while on chemotherapy. New studies have suggested that epoetin alfa (Procrit®, Ortho Biotech Products, LP, Raritan, NJ) can be administered safely and effectively once a week in patients with anemia other than those patients with cancer receiving concomitant chemotherapy. Preclinical studies and pilot clinical studies also have suggested a new application for epoetin alfa in improving cognitive function. Oncology nurses skilled at anticipating, assessing, and managing anemia and its symptoms can be instrumental in improving the QOL of patients with cancer. They should be aware of clinical trials that have suggested advantages of improved dosing schedules and new applications for epoetin alfa.

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