Development and Implementation of a Clinical Survey for Cancer-Related Fatigue Assessment

Maureen Quick, RN, MSN, OCN®, and Marsha Fonteyn, PhD, RN

In recent years, fatigue has been recognized as a prevalent and often debilitating symptom for patients with cancer. Despite the increased recognition of cancer-related fatigue (CRF), it often is not assessed adequately in the clinical setting. This article reports the results of a feasibility test to evaluate the utility and relevance of the Quick Fatigue Assessment Survey (QFAS), a brief fatigue assessment technique for determining the onset, intensity, and duration of fatigue and for identifying known factors that contribute to the experience and severity of fatigue. Patients from four outpatient oncology clinics, with a variety of cancer diagnoses, participated in the test of the QFAS. The overwhelming majority (96%) of patients who completed the QFAS reported experiencing CRF. The nurses who administered the survey subsequently evaluated its utility in clinical practice. Ninety-six percent of the nurses found the QFAS helpful in providing a quick assessment of patient fatigue. The majority (92%) also believed that the QFAS helped identify contributing factors associated with CRF, and 74% responded that the QFAS assisted them in planning for interventions to minimize CRF. A fatigue assessment technique that is relevant and useful in the clinical setting may be a helpful first step in addressing the problem of CRF.

Assessment of Factors Contributing to Fatigue

The Quick Fatigue Assessment Survey (QFAS) was designed as a technique to initially assess patients for CRF and to identify potential contributing factors. Winningham’s Psychobiologic-Entropy Model of Functioning (see Figure 1) demonstrates the relationships among fatigue, other symptoms, and decreased functioning (Winningham, 2000).

Submitted October 2004. Accepted for publication January 23, 2005.

Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/05.CJON.435-439