

Fatigue in Hematopoietic Cell Transplantation Survivors: Correlates, Care Team Communication, and Patient-Identified Mitigation Strategies.

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(Survey administered July 2017 – June 2018)

This study analyzed the causes and impact of fatigue in patients who have undergone hematopoietic cell transplantation (HCT). Fatigue is a common post-transplantation symptom that can deeply affect a patient's quality of life yet is often poorly addressed. This study surveyed 1703 adult HCT recipients to explore fatigue patterns, causes, communication about fatigue with clinicians, and effective strategies for managing fatigue. If present, fatigue was classified as either low or high by the research team. Results showed that 44% of patients experienced some level of fatigue, with 37% bothered by it. High fatigue was associated with worse physical, emotional, and social functioning scores. It was also associated with self-reported chronic graft-versus-host disease, anxiety, depression, and sleep problems. Despite the significant impact of fatigue, it is only sometimes discussed with care teams, and many patients did not discuss it with their providers due to a perceived lack of effective treatments. Among those with high fatigue, 20% did not talk to their care team about it. However, when discussed, patients received recommendations aligned with well-established best practices in fatigue management.

The findings emphasize the need to better understand and treat post-HCT fatigue. Clinicians should actively inquire about fatigue, treat underlying causes, and recommend sleep, rest, and exercise. Efforts should be made to promote communication about fatigue between patients and clinicians. The study suggests that individualized approaches tailored to each patient's needs may be beneficial.