

Distress Levels Among Breast and Prostate Cancer Patients In A Radiotherapy Setting

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Background

- The American Cancer Society estimates over 1.6 million adults will be diagnosed with cancer in 2015 with an estimated 37% to 62% reporting clinically significant distress.
- Distress in patients with cancer is defined as a multifactorial, unpleasant experience of an emotional, psychological, social, or spiritual nature that interferes with the ability to cope with cancer, its physical symptoms and its treatment.
- The National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) recommends distress screening for all patients throughout their cancer trajectory.
- Despite the prevalence of distress and the acknowledgement of the importance of distress screening, sparse research exists in patients undergoing radiotherapy.

Purpose

- To assess level of distress in patients with breast or prostate cancer receiving radiotherapy
- To identify which problems contributed to distress levels

Sample/Setting

- Convenience sample of 217 patients from a Midwest Community Cancer Center
- Male = 87 (40.1%)
 - Female = 130 (59.9%)
 - Mean age = 65.71 (SD 12.19) years



Distress Scale and Problem List

The Distress Thermometer

First please circle the number (0-10) that best describes how much distress you have been experiencing in the past week including today.

Second, please indicate if any of the following has been a problem for you in the past week including today. Be sure to check YES or NO for each.

		YES	NO	Practical Problems	YES	NO	Physical Problems
Extreme Distress 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 No Distress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Child Care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Appearance
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bathing/dressing
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insurance/financial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Breathing
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Changes in urination
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work/school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Constipation
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Diarrhoea
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Family Problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Eating
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dealing with children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fatigue
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dealing with partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Feeling Swollen
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dealing with close Friend/relative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fevers
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Getting around	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Emotional Problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Indigestion	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Depression	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Memory/concentration	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fears	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mouth sores	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nervousness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pain	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sadness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nausea	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Worry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nose dry/congested	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Loss of interest in usual activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spiritual/religious concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Skin dry itchy	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sleep	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tingling in hands/feet	
						Other problems	

Methods

- Retrospective review of medical records of patients with breast and prostate cancer being treated with radiotherapy
- Received IRB approval from the University and affiliated hospitals.
- Used data from Distress Thermometer and Problem List, which are completed at each visit
- Employed a standardized data abstraction tool developed specifically for this project
- Abstracted age, gender, marital status, ethnicity, type of cancer, cancer stage, treatment status, comorbidities, distress score and associated problems



Analysis

- Used descriptive statistics to characterize the sample
- Categorized average distress as:
 - Little to None (0-3)
 - Mild (3.1-5)
 - Moderate (5.1-7)
 - Severe (7.1-10)
- Evaluated bivariate relationships using t-tests, Pearson's correlation coefficients, and ANOVA

Results

- Patient visits ranged from 1 – 16, averaging 5.27 (SD = 3.92)
- Most reported DT score: "0" (n = 343, 31.0%); least reported: "10" (n = 2, 0.2%).
- Average DT score: 2.0 (SD = 2.0)
- Mean number of problems was 4.28
- Patients with breast cancer most concerned about: fatigue (29%), worry about family and friends (24%), weight (24%), fears and worries (21%), and pain (20%)
- Patients with prostate cancer most concerned about fatigue (24%), sleep (23%), pain (18%), worried about children (17%), and urination (16%) .

Conclusions

- The Distress Thermometer and Problem List is useful for initial screening in patients with cancer however individual follow-up is necessary and should be patient specific.
- Specific interventions for the most common problems of fatigue, pain, fears-worries, and sleep should be anticipated.