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PUBLICATION

Indirect characters reflecting health disorders in children living in the radionuclide polluted areas

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Basing on the long-term observation of 1350 children living in the areas radionuclide polluted as a result of the accident at the Chernobyl AES, indirect characters reflecting troubles in state of health within the studied population (characters conditioned by the complex of ecological factors) were distinguished. Characters referring to those are following: 1) increase in total morbidity ($p < 0.01$) and prevalence of thyroid diseases and functional disorders ($p < 0.01$) with high registration index (33 of 58%) among children born in the first two post-accident years (5 to 9 years old at the checkup); 2) high incidence of symptoms, signs and inexact conditions ($p < 0.0001$), and also presence of birth defects in 96% of inspected individuals (born before the accident – 33.4%, born in the accident period – 31.5%, after the accident – 31.1%) plural stigmata being registered in those born in the accident period only; 4) simultaneous formation of several chronic diseases in 68% of children, of which 49.8% were the patients with often relapses in need of planned drug therapy, 15.9% – in need of intensive therapy; 5) in general, poor indices of the health condition indicated by the results of children ranking into groups on the basis of health condition: 17.8% – I; 69.8% – II; 12.3% – III, IV and V; 6) disastrous percentage of children with high integral health index reflecting all the range of multi-variant, multi-directed functional and pathological disorders producing indistinct clinical situation and not subjected to the simple linear systematization.

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PUBLICATION

Anxiety and depression in cancer patients – The HADS-questionnaire as screening instrument in cancer rehabilitation

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Purpose: Anxiety and depression are two emotions that frequently occur together in cancer patients (pts). To detect pts, who are in need for psychosocial support in a complex cancer rehabilitation program, it is necessary to make use of a simple and valid assessment method. For this purpose the HADS-instrument, which is validated for several chronic diseases, was evaluated in this study.

Pts and Methods: At the beginning of a 3–4 weeks clinical rehabilitation program 142 unselected tumor pts (105 female, 37 male) were assessed with the HADS-questionnaire. At the end of the treatment program 105 of these pts could be reevaluated. Tumor localization was as follows: breast ($n = 62$), gastro-intestinal ($n = 23$), gynecological ($n = 14$), lungs ($n = 10$), others ($n = 33$). The majority of the pts ($n = 119$) was in remission, 16 pts had progressive disease, on treatment with hormones or cytotoxic drugs were 42 pts.

Results: At the beginning of the rehabilitation program the median score for all pts was 7.58 for anxiety and 6.40 for depression, compared to 5.8 and 5.4 respectively for a healthy controlgroup. For the subgroup with breast cancer the anxiety score was even higher (8.53), the depression score 6.44. The pts who could be reevaluated at the end of the treatment program had a reduction (n.s.) of their anxiety (5.89) and depression (4.80) scores.

Conclusion: In an unselected group of rehabilitation pts we found higher levels of anxiety and depression, when compared to healthy controls. At the end of the treatment program there was a clear improvement for both emotional reactions.

The HADS-questionnaire can be used as a screening instrument to select pts for psychosocial interventions, and to evaluate changes in emotional states in a rehabilitation setting.

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PUBLICATION

The development and evaluation of a multimedia information program with patients suffering from prostate cancer

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Purpose: In this study a multimedia program (combining sound, text, graphics and images on the computer) been developed for prostate cancer

patients with the envisaged advantages of both flexibility in patients' level of knowledge acquisition, and rapid adaptability to changes in the provided care and information. This research is looking at the effects of the program on the emotions; the decision-making preference and the knowledge acquisition of the patients.

Method: Prostate cancer patients are assessed with a pre and post-trial questionnaire.

Results: So far, the data of 27 prostate cancer patients have been analysed. The results on emotions showed that more patients felt shocked, anxious and frightened, and had a higher need for social support before using the program than after using it. However, more patients felt uncertain, miserable and wanted more information on prostate cancer after using the program. As far as decision making -preference is concerned there was a change to a higher preference to share the decision with the doctor after the use of the program than before. Finally, an increase in knowledge was found after the use of the program.

Conclusion: Patients are more knowledgeable, less anxious and have a higher wish for shared decision-making. The finding that patients felt more miserable and uncertain and were in higher need of both social support and more information after the use of the multimedia program might mean that patients are in need of more guidance of a health professional after the provision of information.

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PUBLICATION

Internet expert system on breast cancer – Two years experience with a German web site (www.mammakarzinom.de)

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Purpose: At ECCO 9 a German web site on breast cancer was launched with the aim to create a tool for exchange of information between the involved specialities.

Methods: Three clinicians provided the guidelines of their institutions as a basis for discussion. In Dec. 98 guidelines on the surgical management of breast cancer were added. The clinicians are available on-line for questions in the 'expert forum' (now 8 experts, including medical oncologists, a rehabilitation oncologist, gynaecologists and a radiotherapist). There is also a general forum and a 'News' section, including addresses, conferences, links, etc.. The web site is sponsored by Novartis Pharma Germany, who is responsible for the contents of the 'Cancer Care' section, but exerts no other editorial control. The site can be accessed by registered users (medical doctors and pharmacists) only, use is free of charge.

Results: By Dec 98 1486 users had registered, now growing at ≈ 100 new users per month. The three most popular sections are 'News', 'Mail' and 'Cancer Care'. So far, users make little active use of the general forum. There is frequent traffic in the expert forum, where the questions and case discussions are highly challenging.

Conclusion: There is a demand for high-quality on-line information on breast cancer in the medical community in Germany. Doctors will need more experience with the Internet to more actively contribute to our web site.

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PUBLICATION

Use of alternative medicine by cancer patient attending conventional treatment in chemotherapy department

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Purpose: Obtain real information about alternative medicine (AM) use in cancer patients (pts) attending conventional treatment in outpatient chemotherapy department.

Methods: After short doctor's explanation 230 pts filled an anonymous questionnaire in separat room. Regarding the patient's desire he received or not additional explanations from medical personnel during questionnaire fill. Having completed questionnaire pts put them into a special box, which was opened at the end of study.

Results: Of the 230 pts responding to the questionnaire, alternative medicine use was quite high (60%). There were no significant correlation between AM use and age, sex, family status, live place (city, small town, country), education, profession, financial status, diagnosis, or duration of