

1125

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.

1126

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.

1127

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.

1128

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.

1129

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

chemotherapy treatment with chi-square analysis. AM users visited church more frequent than non-users ($p = 0.04$). It was a borderline difference in the treatment intent (palliative vs adjuvant) of AM users in favor to palliative chemotherapy (65% of AM users vs 52% of non-users, $p = 0.066$). 38% of pts used one AM methods, 24% – two, 15% – three, 23% – more than three. 78% of AM users took herbs, 31% – pharmacological and biologic treatment, 19% – microelements, 11% – mind-body techniques, 10% – hunger-strike, 16% – other methods. 75% of AM users trusted to doctor for 100%, 16% for 80–90%, 7% for 50%, 1% – non trust, 2% – non answer. Only 45% of users reported to oncologist about use of AM.

Conclusions: Prevalence of real AM use is high (60%). Herbal remedies were the widespread AM methods. Medical oncologists need to be aware that about half of their patients may not tell them about AM use.

1130

PUBLICATION

Radiotherapy as a factor influencing psychological health of patients after breast conserving surgery (phase II)

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Purpose: Daily routine shows that anxiety and concern about radiotreatment is a factor with influence on psychological health of breast cancer patients. Beyond the description of data (phase I) aim of phase II was to identify possible influencing factors on psychological health and to find correlations and interactions between these factors based on a higher quantity of patients.

Patients and Method: 111 Patients participated in the phase II (age 33–84). They received two questionnaires (first and last day of radiotherapy) asking for coping strategies, psychological burden and side effects as well as surrounding factors like medical staff and rooms. Statistically significant correlations between identified factors were identified using t-test.

Results: The question for anxiety regarding radiotherapy allows to identify patients with a high level of treatment-related psychological burden. Patients with a low level of anxiety are significantly less concerned about expected negative effects on breast cosmesis and side effects and feel better informed than patients with high anxiety level. Also perception of treatment facilities (waiting room and treatment room) was significantly more positive.

Conclusions: Our results give evidence that patients with high treatment related anxiety require special attention. This underlines the importance of our phase I-result that the relation to the medical staff is an important factor in regard to reduction of treatment related psychological burden.

1131

PUBLICATION

Quality of life in patients with breast cancer: A psychosocial investigation

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Purpose: To investigate on psychosocial problems of patients with breast cancer in Iran.

Methods: A hospital-based prospective study was conducted to collect data on psychosocial problems in women with breast cancer. During one year 169 breast cancer patients were identified and three months after their initial treatments they were invited to take part in the study. A 42-item questionnaire containing items on study objectives was used to collect data.

Results: Out of 169 breast cancer patients, 152 (90%) agreed to be interviewed. The mean age was 47 (SD = 13.4) years, the majority were married (69%) and underwent the modified radical mastectomy (83%). The main findings indicated that the majority of patients had trouble doing strenuous activities (84%), had pain in their arms and shoulders (68%), felt tense (59%), were worried (68%), felt irritable (72%), were worried about their health in the future (98%), and 43% of patients said that their physical condition and medical treatment interfered with their social life. In addition, it was found that 49% of patients had severe anxiety and 22% had severe depression symptoms.

Conclusion: The findings of this first study of the quality of life in patients with breast cancer in Iran is very alerting. It seems that to improve quality of life in this group of patients there is an urgent need to recognise the problem and provide a comprehensive cancer service for carrying breast cancer patients in Iran.

1132

PUBLICATION

Medical treatment acceptance related to psychotherapeutical support of the oncologic patient

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Introduction: the psychological background of patients with cancer has been a research topic by the authors for many years. A retrospective study analyzing medical records from oncologic patients was made to evaluate whether the psychotherapeutical support modifies somehow the medical treatment acceptance.

Patients and Methods: 52 records from patients with solid tumors, ranging in age from 35 through 65, were evaluated in a case-control study. The medical treatment acceptance was compared between patients with any kind of psychotherapeutical support (i.e. familial and individual assessment with a minimum of 20 sessions) and those with no emotional aid at all.

Results: the acceptance and adhesion to medical treatment (i.e. chemotherapy, radiotherapy) was significantly better (chi square = 8.51 $p = 0.0039$) among patients who were helped to build a strong psychological background.

Conclusions: outstanding efforts are made every moment in order to defeat cancer. Out of these efforts, only a small part is dedicated to understanding the emotional aspects of the disease. The authors conclude that these aspects play a big role in its evolution and should be paid greater attention, not only for academical purposes but also for the patient's benefit.

1133

PUBLICATION

Information an education programmes on breast cancer. The NCI of Naples experience

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The information and education programmes on breast cancer of the NCI of Naples are addressed both to healthy and affected by cancer women. We monthly organise series of lessons on breast diseases and the breast self-exam for the healthy women. 1002 women participated to these meetings in the last three years. Data about the psychological impact caused by these meetings on cancer early detection showed that only 3.8% didn't prefer to know, while 96.2% was more confident after the meeting. 76% of the interviewed women didn't practice the breast self-exam because of the fear and the lack of knowledge about the breast self-exam and how to do. Our Institute provides a pre- and post-operating counselling for the patients. During the pre-operating counselling the patients get to know the diagnosis and the therapeutic options in order to give the informed consent. The past-operating counselling provides a single or in groups meeting soon after the operation and another, after the hospital dismissal, with the COMITES constituted by a surgeon, an oncologist, a radiotherapist, a psychologist and one or more health operators. During this meeting the adjuvant treatment following to the result of the histological exam are communicated to the patient and his relatives. According to our experience the use of this procedure is positive infact thanks to the patient feeling that all the equipe is looking after him, there is an increase (about 45%) of the compliance to the medical treatment.

Clinical pharmacology

1134

ORAL

A phase I trial of SU5416 a novel angiogenesis inhibitor in solid tumours, incorporating MRI assessment of vascular permeability

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SU5416 (Z-3-[(2,4-dimethylpyrrol-5-yl)methylidene]-2-indolinone) is a potent inhibitor of vascular endothelial growth factor receptor signalling. In rodent xenografts treatment with SU5416 led to reduction in tumour growth