Symptom Burden Prevalence Among Cancer Patients: Survey Creation and Validation

Ashley Saake  
*The Pennsylvania State University*

Daniel Ray MD  
*Lehigh Valley Health Network, Daniel.Ray@lvhn.org*

Michael Chyu MD  
*Lehigh Valley Health Network, michael.chyu@lvhn.org*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://scholarlyworks.lvhn.org/research-scholars-posters](http://scholarlyworks.lvhn.org/research-scholars-posters)

Published In/Presented At  
Symptom Burden Prevalence Among Cancer Patients: Survey Creation and Validation

Ashley Saake, The Pennsylvania State University
Daniel Ray, MD; Michael Chyu, MD
Lehigh Valley Health Network, Allentown, Pennsylvania

INTRODUCTION
Cancer patients commonly experience debilitating treatment-induced symptoms like fatigue, nausea, and pain. It is imperative for providers to treat these symptoms successfully so that the patient’s optimum quality of life can be maintained.1 Research on these symptoms and how to manage them properly is critical so that strategies to minimize patient discomfort can be developed and implemented.

Study Objectives:
• Design a survey that captures the symptom burden of cancer patients who are being actively treated.
• Utilize cognitive interviewing to assess the reliability of survey items.
• Revise items so that the survey is a reliable tool that will be used in future research.

METHODS

Survey Design:
• Patient demographic information is obtained from their Electronic Medical Record.
• The Edmonton Symptom Assessment System evaluates the patient’s symptom burden.2
• Items that address healthcare documents, spirituality, and quality of life acquire a broader scope of patient’s circumstances.

Survey Validation:
• Cognitive interviews were conducted with 15 Palliative Medicine staff members.
• Revisions were made to reflect their professional feedback and opinions.

RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Question</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Revised Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Do you have an Advance Directive?</td>
<td>Define Advance Directive, Create an &quot;I don’t know&quot; option</td>
<td>Do you have written documentation stating your wishes in the event that you are unable to make medical decisions for yourself? (Examples: living will, advance directive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Please choose the word that most accurately describes how often you have experienced the following symptoms in the past 7 days. -Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always</td>
<td>Quantify the number of times patient has experienced symptoms</td>
<td>Never, Rarely (1-2 times), Sometimes (3-4 times), Often (5-6 times), Always (Everyday)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) In the past 7 days, how often did you feel that your faith gave you strength to cope with your illness?</td>
<td>Change &quot;faith&quot; to &quot;spirituality&quot;</td>
<td>In the past 7 days, how often did you feel that spirituality gave you strength to cope with your illness?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) How would you rate your quality of life during the past 7 days?</td>
<td>Define quality of life</td>
<td>How would you rate your quality of life during the past 7 days? (Quality of life is defined as the standard of health, comfort and happiness experienced by an individual)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Original Vs. Revised Questions.

DISCUSSION
• Using a validated survey is a pivotal part of the research process.
• Conducting research without a reliable tool can compromise the relevancy and accuracy of the collected data.
• Cognitive interviews provided an abundance of beneficial, professional feedback which led to the revision of several items.
• These revisions made the survey more reliable, clear, and consistent.
• Consistency is crucial to ensure that all survey items are interpreted similarly by every participant so that valid data is collected and analyzed.

FUTURE RESEARCH
• The Palliative Medicine Department will conduct a study using this survey in the coming year.
• The survey will be administered to cancer patients who have been undergoing treatment for at least 3 months at the John and Dorothy Morgan Cancer Center.
• The goal of this research will be to determine which symptoms are most prevalent, and the specific diagnoses that are at risk for a high symptom burden.
• This data will facilitate the development of strategies to manage cancer patient’s treatment-induced symptoms more effectively.

REFERENCES

© 2016 Lehigh Valley Health Network

A PASSION FOR BETTER MEDICINE™
610-402-CARE
LVHN.org