

JOINT EVENT ON

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A pain survey to support role development for radiation oncology in Ghana

Kofi Adesi Kyei

University of Ghana, Ghana

Aim: The aim is to determine whether using a pain questionnaire the RTs could contribute to the management of pain in the patients undergoing external beam radiotherapy.

Methods: To explore the impact of RTs integrating pain assessment into their daily routine the use of a pain questionnaire was tested through a prospective survey of 90 eligible cancer patients, over the age of 18 years, who were undergoing radiotherapy and had pain. Data retrieved from the 90 distributed questionnaires was entered into a database and analyzed statistically using SPSS version 16. Response frequencies for the survey questions were determined and are displayed in graphical format. The analysis and interpretation also included a process of coding for open-ended questions through careful examination and categorization of the textual data into identified or emerging themes. Approval for the study was obtained from the research ethics committee of a higher education institution. The ethics approval was supported by written permission for the study to be conducted at the study site. All study participants gave informed consent as a participant in the study, prior to the commencement.

Results: The results from the quantitative analysis of the data show that the patient sample comprised of 74.4% (67/90) female and 25.6% (23/90) male respondents. The mean age of the participants was 52 years and the ages ranging from 19 years to 75 years with a median age of 53 years. It was found that 78.2% (68/87) of participants had pain in one site and 21.8% (19/87) had pain in more than one site while 9.2% (8/87) had mild pain, 74.7% (65/87) had discomforting pain and 16.1% (14/87) had extreme pain.

Conclusions: Those that needed urgent attention were identified and immediately referred to the doctors. Others who had pain but could wait till their treatment review date were monitored and reassured by the RTs. Patients who had mild pain could be managed by the RTs and were given the necessary assistance. Overall, the results highlight the need to improve the quality of treatment given to cancer patients undergoing radiotherapy by effectively managing their pain. It is suggested that it is time RTs embark on role extension in the interest of improved patient care. With the increase in referrals of patients for radiotherapy, but with the same numerical strength of radiation oncologists, doctors and RTs, we all need to find ways to work more efficiently so that we manage the workload while constantly striving to improve the care and quality of life of our cancer patients.

kakyeyi@ug.edu.gh