

PRISM: Priority Symptom Management Project Phase I: Assessment

Mary E. Ropka, PhD, RN, FAAN, and Pat Spencer-Cisek, MS, CS, ANP, AOCN®

Purpose/Objectives: To provide an overview of the process, goals, and outcome recommendations from the assessment phase of the Oncology Nursing Society's Priority Symptom Management (PRISM) project and to provide the foundation for a series of evidence-based practice and qualitative systematic review articles generated from the first phase of PRISM.

Data Sources: Published articles, abstracts, and books; computerized databases; nonpublished research; personal communications; and proceedings of the PRISM summit meeting.

Data Synthesis: Symptom management is a key component in quality cancer care. The assessment phase of PRISM yielded systematic reviews with an evidence-based framework to evaluate key symptoms, developed a framework for teaching and evaluating other symptoms, and recommended future ONS initiatives.

Conclusions: Outcome recommendations from the PRISM summit targeted practice; professional and public education; research; and health policy.

Implications for Nursing Practice: These activities provide background for subsequent evidence-based practice and qualitative systematic review articles that will focus on cancer symptom management.

Symptom management is a key component of cancer care across the disease trajectory, from prevention to cure to palliation. It cuts across cancer diagnoses and the entire spectrum of disease, cancer treatments, patient populations, and healthcare settings. Cancer symptom management is relevant to different healthcare disciplines and components of the healthcare delivery system such as healthcare providers, administrators, policy makers, and patients with cancer and their families. Cancer-related symptoms that the individual and family must learn to manage result from the initial cancer diagnosis, the impact of both immediate and long-term consequences of cancer treatment, and the effects of disease progression.

Oncology nurses are experts in cancer symptom management. They develop new approaches and refine current knowledge to enhance assessment, improve interventions to prevent and treat symptoms, and reduce the impact of symptoms on health outcomes. In the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS, 2000) Position on Quality Cancer Care, appropriate symptom management for patients with cancer is identified as a supportive care component of quality cancer care. Dedication of oncology nurses to symptom management led to development of the Priority Symptom Management (PRISM) project by the ONS Foundation Center for Leadership, Information, and Research.

PRISM

PRISM is a multiphase, multiyear initiative to identify symptom management as a priority for oncology nurses in the development of education programs, research, healthcare services, and health policy. PRISM addresses cancer- and treatment-related symptom management through activities such as a detailed assessment of the current state of the knowledge, education programs for oncology nurses and the public, and research grants established to enhance symptom management and demonstrate the impact of oncology nurse management of cancer-related symptoms in diverse populations. Figure 1 presents the goals of the PRISM activities.

Mary E. Ropka, PhD, RN, FAAN, is an associate professor in the Department of Health Evaluation Sciences in the School of Medicine and an associate professor in the School of Nursing at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. Pat Spencer-Cisek, MS, CS, ANP, AOCN®, is the clinical director of Oncology Services at Glens Falls Hospital in Glens Falls, NY. (Submitted May 2001. Accepted for publication August 20, 2001.) Ropka and Spencer-Cisek have written this article for the PRISM Assessment Project Team. It is one of a series of articles resulting from PRISM, a project funded through an unrestricted grant from Ortho Biotech Products, L.P. given to the ONS Foundation Center for Leadership, Information, and Research (CLIR).

