

A Phenomenologic Study of Fatigue in Adolescents Receiving Treatment for Cancer

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Purpose/Objectives: To generate a detailed description of how adolescents with cancer manage their daily lives and the way in which fatigue affects this.

Design: Phenomenologic.

Setting: A pediatric oncology unit at a regional cancer center in the United Kingdom.

Sample: A convenience sample of adolescents (N = 8), aged 16–19 years and with hematologic or solid tumors, who currently were undergoing primary treatment.

Methods: Semistructured interviews were conducted using 11 open-ended questions.

Main Research Variables: Adolescents' perceptions of fatigue, well-being, and ability to maintain normal activities.

Findings: Adolescents reported fatigue as overwhelming and embedded in a syndrome of symptoms and emotions associated with the illness itself and with treatment. Fatigue had a significant effect on physical, psychological, and social well-being, placing an extra burden on adolescents who were striving for normality.

Conclusions: Equipped with a rich description of fatigue, clinicians will be better prepared to initiate strategies congruent with their own work settings and particular patients.

Implications for Nursing: The findings should enable healthcare professionals to construct a more accurate and perceptive picture of the needs of particular individuals, highlighting those that may be amenable to intervention.

Key Points . . .

- ▶ Cancer threatens the life and personhood of adolescents.
- ▶ Fatigue has been shown to be prevalent in children and adolescents with cancer.
- ▶ A cyclical relationship exists between fatigue and other factors, such as busy lives, study, and work pressures.

functional aspects of their lives. But this realignment of life occurs alongside their struggle to meet normal developmental milestones. The overall aim of this exploratory study was to describe fatigue as a phenomenon and to identify whether and how it affects well-being and the ability to maintain normal activities in adolescents undergoing cancer treatment.

Background

Fatigue

Fatigue has been defined as a “subjective, unpleasant symptom that incorporates total body feelings ranging from tiredness to exhaustion creating an unrelenting overall condition

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Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/05.ONF.651-660