

PATIENT CRC CLASSROOM

COGNITIVE DYSFUNCTION

ManageCRC.com

A forum for healthcare practitioners promoting colorectal cancer prevention and managing the care of patients with colorectal cancer



OVERVIEW

Sometimes referred to as “chemo brain” or “chemo fog,” cognitive dysfunction (CD) can be a disturbing side effect of cancer therapy. Recent studies have begun to dispel the myth that CD is due to stress or depression, although these conditions can make CD worse. Studies of brain changes during CD symptoms have shown that changes in blood flow to the brain happen during and following chemotherapy. Some factors that may increase the risk of CD include:

- Tumor in the brain
- Increasing age
- Estrogen deficiency
- Certain types of chemotherapy
- Hormonal therapy
- Certain types of steroids

Poor diet, pain, sleep disturbances, menopause, and low red blood cell counts (anemia) can also contribute to CD. More studies are needed to fully understand the physical and psychological issues of CD.



WHAT CAN HELP

- Make lists for shopping, tasks, and telephone numbers
- Use a personal planner for daily schedules
- Keep frequently used items (keys, cell phone, eyeglasses) in one place
- Maintain a normal routine
- Try to get an adequate amount of sleep, eat a balanced diet, and plan for regular exercise
- Consider meditation or relaxation exercises on a regular basis.



RESOURCES

Oncology Nursing Society, www.cancersymptoms.org

Chemocare, www.chemocare.com

Lance Armstrong Foundation, <http://www.livestrong.org>



COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR TEAM

It's important to let your doctor or nurse know if you feel that your ability to concentrate, work, or interact with your family or friends has changed. While these symptoms are usually due to CD and not a more serious problem, keeping your health care team aware of changes will help them care for you and relieve any anxiety you may have over these changes.

These materials are provided by the Advisory Panel from the Web site manageCRC.com, a discussion forum for healthcare professionals managing the care of patients with colorectal cancer. Patient resources and useful print out are available at <http://managecrc.com/Resources/> The opinions and information presented do not necessarily reflect those of the site manager or its sponsor. We do not endorse any products or services described here and are not responsible for the accuracy of information offered on Internet links provided for the user's convenience. We assume no legal liability or responsibility for the information provided here or on the manageCRC.com Web site, which is presented for educational purposes only. A qualified health care provider should be consulted for medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment.

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