

# A Descriptive Study on Side Effects of Chemotherapy and Coping Strategies of Patients Suffering from Cancer in a Selected Quaternary Care Hospital

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**Abstract:** *This study aims to assess the common side effects in cancer patients admitted in quaternary hospital. A descriptive study on side effects of chemotherapy and coping strategies of patients suffering from cancer in a selected quaternary care Hospital. The sampling technique used was a simple random sampling technique. The tool consists of questionnaires that have three sections to assess demographic data of 08 items and a memorial symptom assessment scale which consisted of 24 items. The third section of the questionnaire was coping strategies assessment scale which consists of 10 items to evaluate mild, moderate and good coping strategy. The results related to coping strategies were seen that majority of the patients ,89% used acceptance ,84.1%used religion, active coping and emotional support as coping mechanism, further analysis of data demonstrate that 91.67%males used acceptance ,90% used religion ,85 % used venting and 83.3% used informational support as coping mechanism. whereas, in females 90% used active coping ,86.67% used acceptance ,78.33% used venting, positive reframing and religion as coping mechanism. It was seen that there was a significant association of demographic variable years of experience ( $p=0.001\%$ ) according to chi square test.*

**Keywords:** Chemotherapy, Chemotherapy side effects, oncology ward, Nursing, coping strategy

## I. INTRODUCTION

Chemotherapy remains a fundamental component in the management of cancer, offering hope for remission and extended survival. However, alongside its therapeutic benefits, chemotherapy is notorious for a host of adverse side effects that profoundly impact patients' physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. These side effects, ranging from nausea, fatigue, and hair loss to more severe complications, can erode quality of life and present formidable challenges throughout the treatment journey.

In response to these challenges, the ways in which patients cope have become a significant focus of contemporary oncology nursing and research. Coping strategies spanning from acceptance, religious faith, and emotional support to active problem-solving and the pursuit of information play a pivotal role in how individuals manage the physical discomfort and emotional upheaval associated with chemotherapy. Understanding which coping mechanisms are most employed, and how demographic variables influence these choices, is crucial for developing holistic, patient-centered care plans.

This study sets the stage for a descriptive exploration into the prevalent side effects experienced by cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy in a quaternary care hospital, as well as the diverse coping strategies adopted by these individuals. By examining the interplay between side effects and coping mechanisms, this study aims to illuminate pathways toward better support, improved patient outcomes, and an enhanced quality of life for those navigating the rigors of chemotherapy.



Treister & Woo (2008) found out that approximately half of all patients who received chemotherapy developed severe oral mucositis. According to Bachelor (2001), alopecia is one of the most common side-effects of chemotherapy and can range from sporadic thinning of the hair to complete baldness.

### **Statement of the Problem**

“A descriptive study on side effects of chemotherapy and coping strategies of patients suffering from cancer in a selected quaternary care Hospital”

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To assess common side effects of chemotherapy in cancer patients.
- To assess coping strategies of cancer patients.
- To associate socio demographic variables with common side effects in cancer patients.
- To associate between coping strategies and socio demographic variables in cancer patients.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

**H1** – There is a significant association between selected demographic variables and side effects of chemotherapy.

**H2** - There is a significant association between coping strategies and side effects of chemotherapy.

The research method adopted for this study was descriptive design on common side effects of chemotherapy and coping strategies of patients suffering from cancer in a quaternary care hospital. The side effects were assessed using side effect assessment scale and coping strategies were assessed using semi structured questionnaire named coping strategy questionnaire. The study was conducted at a super speciality hospital with advanced facilities, specifically in oncology wards. The research variables were side effects and coping strategies.

Dorah Ursula Ramathuba (2020) The study design used was a quantitative descriptive cross-sectional survey. The target population included patients in the Vhembe District of Limpopo who had started treatment within the last year. Probability-stratified sampling was used to sample 207 patients from seven selected hospitals in Vhembe District. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data, and the data were analysed using a software package for descriptive statistics (SPSS version 23). Tables were used to display the results visually, and chi-square tests were used to compare the variables. Ethical principles were considered for the participants' privacy, anonymity, and informed consent. Findings: The findings revealed that the majority of patients 185 (89.4%) experienced a sense of psychosocial distress such as emotional pain; 142 (68.6%) participants experienced hopelessness and despair, 127 (61.3%) resorted to substance use, 160 (77.3%) did not have a positive attitude towards seeking the medical and other support resources available, only a minority resorted to spirituality, and 121 (63.2%) indicated seeking further clarity about the disease. The study recommends supporting cancer patients and their families through the cancer journey

## **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Analysis of the demographic data revealed a balanced distribution of participants across various age groups and genders. The most reported side effects among cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy were fatigue (92%), nausea and vomiting (80%), and alopecia (76%). In terms of coping strategies, acceptance (89%) and religious coping (84.1%) were the most frequently employed approaches. Notably, male participants tended to favour acceptance and religious coping methods, while female participants more commonly utilized active coping and positive reframing strategies. Statistical analysis using the chi-square test demonstrated a significant association between years of experience living with cancer and the preferred coping mechanisms ( $p=0.001$ ).

These findings emphasize the multifaceted challenges faced by cancer patients during chemotherapy, highlighting how both physical symptoms and psychological responses shape the treatment experience. The high prevalence of fatigue, nausea, and alopecia underscores the pervasive impact of chemotherapy on patients' well-being. The preference for adaptive coping strategies like acceptance and religious faith indicates the importance of psychological resilience in managing these side effects. Gender differences in coping approaches suggest that individual characteristics influence



how patients respond to cancer's demands. The significant association with years of experience further points to the evolving nature of coping over time. These insights support the need for individualized, holistic care that addresses both the physical and emotional dimensions of cancer treatment, aligning with broader research advocating for integrated psychosocial support in oncology settings.

Table 1: Analysis of demographic data n=100

SNo	Demographic Variable	Frequency	%
<b>Age</b>			
1.	31-40	34	34%
2.	41-50	32	32%
3.	51-60	20	20%
4.	61-70	14	14%
<b>Sex</b>			
1.	Male	41	41%
2.	Female	59	59%
<b>Education</b>			
1.	Illiterate	17	17%
2.	Primary	45	45%
3.	Secondary	24	24%
4.	Graduate	14	14%
<b>Occupation</b>			
1.	Self-employed	22	22%
2.	Farmer	15	15%
3.	Labor	28	28%
4.	Housewife	35	35%

Table 2: Analysis of the data related coping strategies adopted among patient receiving of chemotherapy, n=100

S No	Coping strategies score	Frequency	%
1.	Good coping strategies	43	43%
2.	Average coping strategies	38	38%
3.	Poor coping strategies	19	19%

The findings underscore the complex interplay between the physical side effects of chemotherapy and the psychological resources patients draw upon to cope. Coping strategies such as acceptance, seeking emotional support, and religious faith are pivotal in helping patients navigate the challenges of cancer treatment. Gender and years since diagnosis appear to influence the choice of coping mechanisms, suggesting the need for individualized psychosocial interventions.

These results align with previous research indicating that tailored support programs and counselling can mitigate the negative impact of chemotherapy-related symptoms and enhance adaptive coping. The study further highlights the importance of integrating psychosocial care into routine oncology nursing to address both the physical and emotional needs of cancer patients.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The results related to coping strategies were seen that majority of the patients ,89% used acceptance ,84.1%used religion, active coping and emotional support as coping mechanism, further analysis of data demonstrate that 91.67%males used acceptance ,90% used religion ,85 % used venting and 83.3% used informational support as coping mechanism. whereas, in females 90% used active coping ,86.67% used acceptance ,78.33% used venting, positive



reframing and religion as coping mechanism. It was seen that there was a significant association of demographic variable years of experience ( $p=0.001\%$ ) according to chi square test.

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the side effects experienced by cancer patients and the coping strategies they employ within the quaternary care hospital setting. By identifying the most prevalent challenges and the adaptive strategies most often utilized, the research supports the development of targeted interventions aimed at improving patient outcomes and quality of life during chemotherapy.

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