



MEASURING ONCOLOGY NURSING-SENSITIVE PATIENT OUTCOMES: EVIDENCE-BASED SUMMARY **MUCOSITIS**

Mucositis is an inflammatory and potentially ulcerative process that affects the mucous membranes of the oral cavity and gastrointestinal tract of individuals receiving chemotherapy and radiation therapy as treatments for cancer (i.e., mucotoxic chemotherapy, hyperfractionated radiotherapy to a field that includes the oral cavity, and concurrent chemotherapy and radiation therapy) (Avritscher et al., 2004; Brown & Wingard, 2004). Oncology nurses have the potential to serve a pivotal role in the advancement of the state of the art and knowledge of the treatment and prevention of mucositis in patients receiving cancer treatment. This summary was reviewed and critiqued by research and clinical content experts in March 2005.

Key Points

1. Mucositis, rather than stomatitis, is the preferred term.
2. Limited use of valid and reliable instruments has interfered with documentation of the occurrence and severity of mucositis.
3. Mucositis is a systemic process not limited to the oral cavity; however, researchers believe that the mouth can serve as a window to mucous membrane damage in other areas of the body during systemic cancer treatment.
4. No evidence supports a universal intervention for the prevention or treatment of mucositis.
5. Mucositis remains a major dose-limiting side effect of cancer therapy.

Recommendations

1. Routine oral cavity assessments should be completed using valid and reliable instruments to measure oral cavity changes.
2. Evidence-based standardized oral care protocols can serve to improve mucositis-related patient outcomes.
3. Nurses can teach patients and family members about the importance of oral care to decrease the likelihood of life-threatening complications secondary to mucositis.
4. Additional research is needed to identify effective agents for the prevention and treatment of mucositis secondary to cancer treatment.

Topics for Future Research

1. Determine the validity and reliability of current instruments for measurement of oral mucositis.
2. Establish mucotoxicity of chemotherapy and radiation therapy regimens through descriptive study using valid and reliable instruments.
3. Identify factors contributing to mucositis.



4. Design and test interventions for the prevention and treatment of mucositis in patients across all ages receiving chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy.

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