ABSTRACT

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS FOR ANXIETY IN ADULT CANCER PATIENTS

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Aim: The purpose of this systematic review is to evaluate the data available on psychosocial interventions for anxiety in adult cancer patients in order to provide recommendations for practice.

Background: The average lifetime risk of developing any type of cancer is 44% for men and 37% for women. Anxiety is a common reaction to the diagnosis, treatment, and survival of cancer. The Institute of Medicine identified strong evidence for support of psychosocial interventions in cancer care. Oncology Nursing Society practice guidelines integrate psychosocial care into standard practice protocols. In order to provide quality cancer care, patients’ psychosocial needs must be addressed. Due to the volume of data available to guide practice, systematic reviews are necessary to consolidate findings and provide evidence-based recommendations for practice.

Methods: Publications addressing psychosocial interventions for anxiety in adult cancer patients in English between May 2008 and June 2011 were extracted from
PubMed, CINAHL, and the Cochrane Collaboration. Twenty-two articles were identified as meeting study criteria. These 22 articles were reviewed and a quality rating was assigned. Quality was assessed via a quality rating scale as well as an expert advisory panel.

Results: Utilization of a quality rating scale was time-intensive and provided no significant benefit. Quality assessment via the expert advisory panel generated usable recommendations for practice.

Conclusion: Expert panel review provided data that proved most valuable to the clinician for providing recommendations for practice. For the prevention and treatment of anxiety in adult cancer patients, supportive-expressive therapies were identified as being recommended for practice, while cognitive behavioral therapy, psychoeducational interventions, progressive muscle relaxation, and coaching were identified as likely to be effective.