

Side effects following chemotherapy and associated comorbidities and socio demographic factors among cancer patients at Thellipalai Trail Cancer Hospital

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Background: Side effects following chemotherapy impact patient well being and quality of life. This study aimed to determine the prevalence and assess the common side effects of chemotherapy and the influence of co-morbidities and socio-demographic factors on side effects in cancer patients at Thellipalai Trail Cancer Hospital in northern Sri Lanka.

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional hospital-based study was conducted at Thellipalai Trail Cancer Hospital between November 2017 and January 2018 among inpatients and outpatients visiting the clinic who had undergone at least one cycle of chemotherapy in the past year. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 23.

Results: A total of 219 patients participated in the study; 38.8% (n=85) and 61.2% (n=134) were male and female respectively. The majority (86.3%) of participants were educated below GCE O/L, and 64.3% had a family income between Rs. 20, 000 and 50, 000. The prevalence of co-morbidities was 37.9% with hypertension, diabetic mellitus and bronchial asthma most common. About one fourth of participants (25.6%) were diagnosed with breast cancer. Cisplatin was the most frequent (33.3%) drug used among chemotherapy agents. The hemoglobin levels in patients were low in a large majority of the sample (83.1%). Hair loss was the most prevalent side effect, which manifested in the early phase. Women had higher rates of dysuria (early: 19.4%, late: 21.4%) than men ($p \leq 0.03$).

Conclusion: Hair loss was the most common side effect in cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy. All side effects were the same for men and women except dysuria in the late phase.