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Understanding and Managing the Symptoms of Chemo Brain in Oncology Patients

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Purpose

- The purpose of the educational project/pamphlet is to increase awareness to the condition of “chemo brain” whereby health care professionals can educate and intervene accordingly with a variety of management techniques.

Background

- Chemo brain is a condition where cancer patients who have already undergone treatment begin to experience memory loss and thinking issues.
- This condition is currently being researched as it is not fully understood why these cognitive changes occur for cancer patients (Chemo Brain, 2017).
- With proper education, health care professionals can further assess for the underlying condition of chemo brain and diagnose appropriately, in addition to providing adequate education on management for the condition.

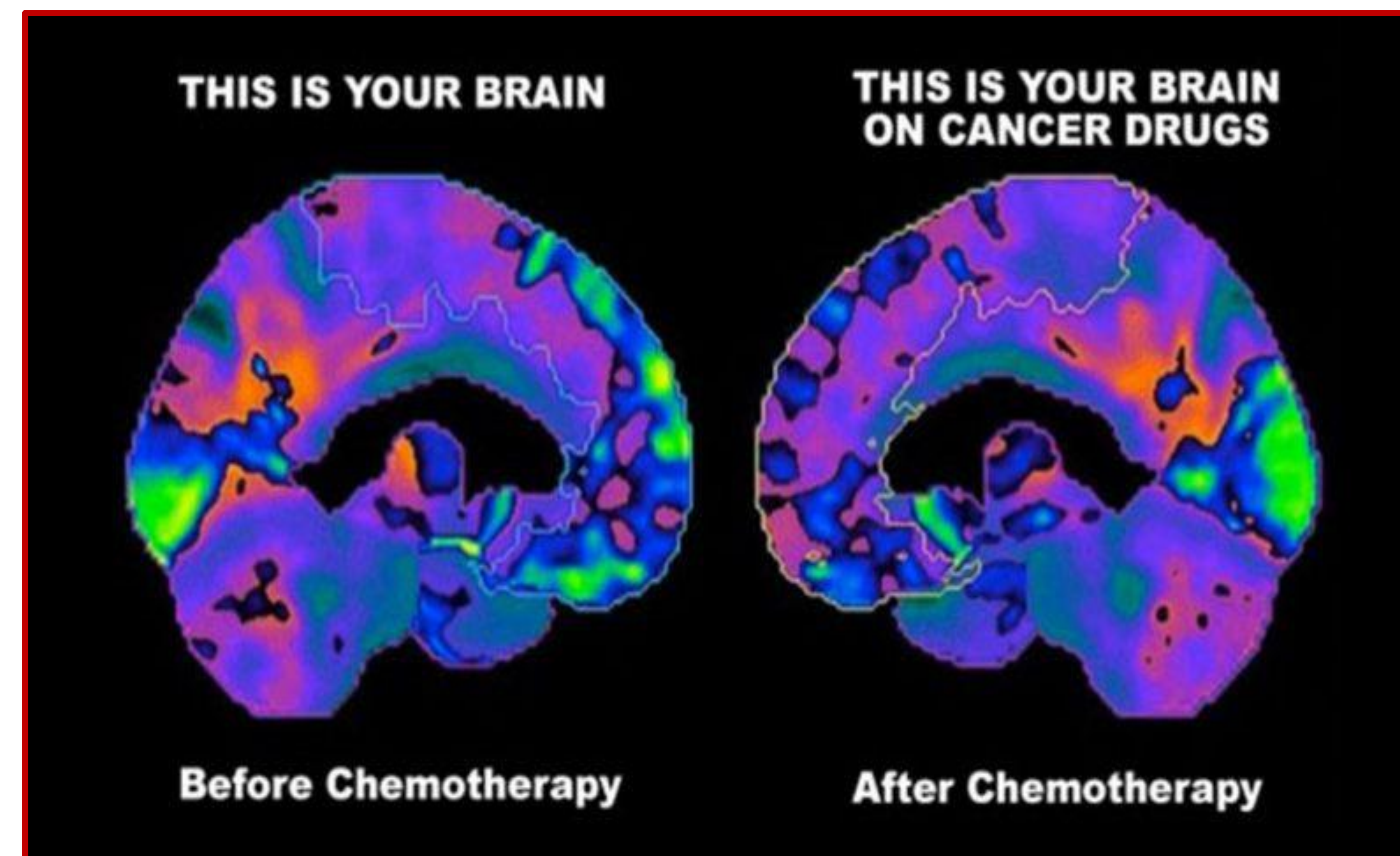
Review of the Literature

- According to Selamat, M. H., Loh, S. Y., Mackenzie, L., & Vardy, J., (2014), chemo brain impacted the intrapersonal lives and interpersonal relationships of breast cancer survivors.
- The study also showed that chemo brain affects 10-40% of cancer patients.
- When analyzing this condition among different cultures, it was found that the cognitive changes experienced by patients was dependent on culture.

Significance to Nursing

- As a result of the harsh treatment methods cancer patients undergo, many experience cognitive changes which are often attributed to a condition called chemo brain.
- Educating clinicians assessing, diagnosing, treatment and managing the condition will increase the patient centered care for cancer patients.

Chemo Brain



Discussion/Important Results

- Subjects of the study did in fact identify and verify that they had experienced symptoms of chemo brain.
- Survivors were found to be “linked together in a line of argument, was a consistent account on their struggles to self-manage the chemo-brain impairments that impact their daily lives” (Selamat et. al., 2014).
- Subjects also determined that chemo brain was, “mis-recognized, under-recognized, and sometimes negated” because of what is thought to be a lack of knowledge on the condition (Selamat et. al., 2014).

Management Strategies for Patients

Lifestyle changes

- ❖ **Exercise the mind:** doing crossword puzzles, sudoku
 - ❖ **Exercise the body:** walking, swimming
 - ❖ **Provide breaks:** throughout the day to promote rest.
 - ❖ **Stay organized:** encourage patients to make schedules
 - ❖ **Timing:** encourage patients to choose to accomplish perform tasks during the time of day when they are most focused.
- (Chemo Brain, 2017).

COPING STRATEGIES	32	34	36	37	38
Pharmacological					
Nutritional products		X			
Complementary and alternative medicine		X			
Non Pharmacological					
Healthy lifestyle practices		X	X		
Physical activities		X	X		
Mental activities	x	x	X		
Practical reminders					
Written	X	X	X	X	x
Use of technology	x	x			

Coping strategies adopted by survivors.

(Selamat et. al., 2014).

Future Recommendations

- Further research needs to be completed on the condition of chemo brain
- Health care professionals need further education on chemo brain in order to effectively care for oncology patients.
- Creation of a standardized assessment tool for health care providers to use for the screening of the condition .

Selected References

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