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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.

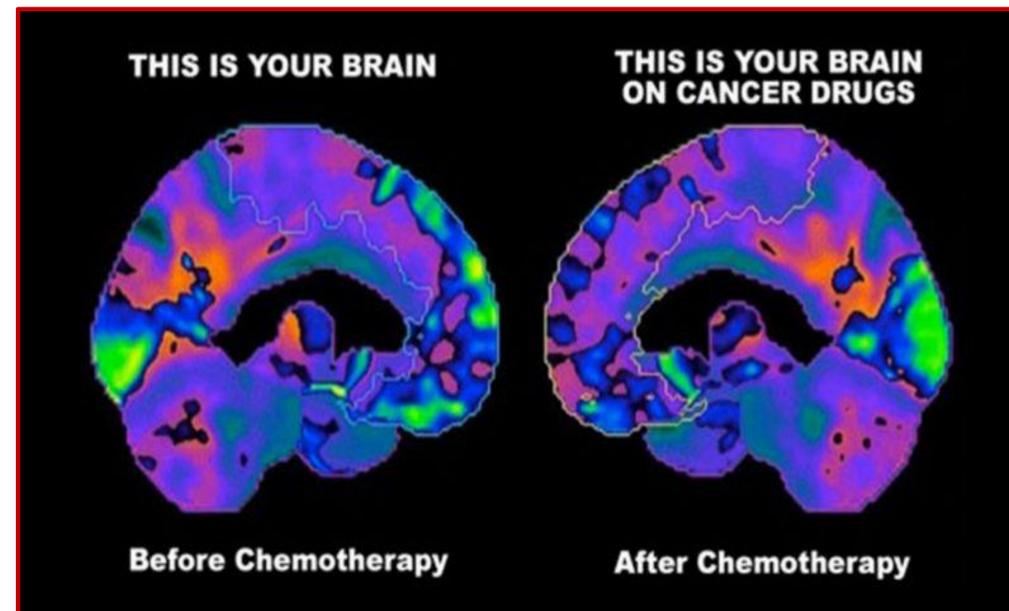
**Review of the Literature**

- 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
<b>Pharmacological</b>					
Nutritional products		X			
Complementary and alternative medicine		X			
<b>Non Pharmacological</b>					
Healthy lifestyle practices		X	X		
Physical activities		X	X		
Mental activities	x	x	X		
<b>Practical reminders</b>					
<b>Written</b>	X	X	X	X	x
<b>Use of technology</b>	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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