

Attitude, practices, and associated factors towards self-care for chemotherapy side effects among cancer patients at Apeksha Hospital, Sri Lanka

L. L. N. T. Alwis¹, G. V. M. N. Karunarathne¹, K. S. Nimasha¹, K. M. Gampalage¹,
L. S. Ruhunage¹, H. V. D. B. Vidanage¹, K. Nilmini¹, M. M. G. C. Mahanama¹,
M. G. S. Nishara², M. G. A. S. Malkanthie²

¹*Faculty of Nursing, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka*

²*Department of Fundamentals of Nursing, Faculty of Nursing, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka*

Chemotherapy is a common cancer treatment that often leads to significant side effects affecting patients' well-being. Self-care practices are essential for managing these side effects; however, the attitudes involved in self-care can vary based on demographics and clinical factors, which can impact quality of life. The aim of the study was to assess attitudes, practices, and associated factors related to self-care for chemotherapy side effects among cancer patients attending Apeksha Hospital, Maharagama, Sri Lanka. A cross-sectional quantitative study was conducted with 387 patients diagnosed with any type of cancer who were undergoing chemotherapy at Apeksha Hospital. Data were collected interviewer-administered questionnaire and analysed with SPSS version 27.0 using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests. Ethical approval was granted by the Ethics Review Committee, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo. A majority of participants (78.6%) had a positive attitude towards self-care for managing chemotherapy side effects. Significant associations were found between attitudes, education level ($p = 0.001$), and employment status ($p = 0.024$). Common side effects reported included fatigue (83.2%), hair loss (88.4%), and loss of appetite (87.6%). Patients commonly used strategies like rest (60.8%), dietary changes (51.5%), medication (69.4%), and wearing wigs (58.8%) to manage these effects. Peripheral neuropathy affected 69.3% of patients, with 32.5% not adhering to any self-care practices. Of those experiencing decreased sexual desire (15.2%), 50.8% communicated with their partner, while 44.1% took no action. Although 87.04% engaged in some form of self-care measures, no significant relationship was found between these practices and attitude levels ($p = 0.366$). Patients demonstrated admirable positivity and engaged in self-care practices to manage the side effects of chemotherapy. Notable variations emerged, particularly concerning neuropathy and sexual health. Factors such as education and employment status significantly influenced these attitudes. Enhancing patient education and supportive strategies is essential for improving self-care and treatment outcomes.

Keywords: *Attitude, Chemotherapy, Practices, Self-care, Side effects*