Author's response to reviews

Title: Factors associated with cancer-related fatigue in breast cancer patients undergoing endocrine therapy in an urban setting: a cross-sectional study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Author's response to reviews

Title: Factors associated with cancer-related fatigue in breast cancer patients during endocrine treatment in an urban setting

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Version: 6  Date: 12 May 2010

Author's response to reviews: see over
Reviewer's report

Title: Factors associated with cancer-related fatigue among breast cancer during endocrine treatment in an urban setting

Version: 6 Date: 12 May 2010

Reviewer: Kristine A Donovan

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The authors identify their study as a retrospective study (see, for example, the first sentence under Methods/Participants). It is more accurately identified as a cross-sectional study. Some of the questions are retrospective in nature; that is, they ask respondents to recall their level of fatigue prior to beginning endocrine therapy.

   The reviewer is correct, the first sentence under Methods/Participants has been changed.

2. In the Methods and elsewhere, the authors state that their participants consist of “54 women having completed endocrine therapy and 261 having been undergoing treatment.” This is confusing, grammatically incorrect, and needs to be clarified. Do the authors mean that at the time of their participation in the study, 54 had completed endocrine therapy and 261 were still receiving endocrine therapy?

   We have clarified this in the Abstract and Methods/Procedures.

3. The authors draw very broad conclusions from the questions they apparently asked of the breast cancer patients. There is information to be found in the data but the authors over interpret their findings. The results are relatively straightforward and simple. Focusing on these results and clearly interpreting the data would be sufficient.

   The conclusions and results have been changed as the reviewer indicates.

4. It appears that the researchers asked respondents to indicate whether their fatigue had changed since beginning endocrine therapy, though this is not particularly clear. For some women the start of endocrine therapy was five years previously. This needs to be clarified in the text (at least identify for the reader, not just the reviewer, the specific question used). The potential for recall bias is increased by including women who have already completed endocrine therapy with women currently on endocrine therapy. Did the
outcome differ between these two groups of women?

We have clarified these contents in the Methods/Procedures and Discussion/Limitations.

5. Results. Second paragraph. The authors state that 189 patients had improved fatigue or fatigue in “complete remission.” A woman who indicates her fatigue is reduced not necessarily in “complete remission.” What questions from the questionnaire were used to assess this? This needs to be made explicit.

We have clarified the contents in the second paragraph of the results as the reviewer indicates.

Part V in the questionnaire:

【3】 During endocrine therapy, fatigue score was (Please write the score)

① Reduce ② Increase

6. In general, the authors overstate what they found in this cross-sectional, correlational study. The questions that ask participants about changes to fatigue levels are subject to considerable recall bias making the data derived from these of questionable validity.

We have clarified these contents in the Methods/Procedures and Discussion/Limitations.

7. The manuscript would benefit from better organization and a reduction in the length of the Introduction and Discussion sections. There is a lack of clarity in the results and the interpretation of these results, and the writing and use of the English language is not good. Some of the corrections, including the now included information about exclusion criteria read as if the text were lifted verbatim from previously published articles; the use of written English in this section is much better than the rest of the text. An editor or colleague more familiar with written English should be recruited to improve the grammar and sentence structure of the manuscript.

We have revised the manuscript, changes made as indicated by the reviewer. The article has been polished by a native English speaker of the AJE (American Journal Experts). A number of sentences were rearranged such that the main point of the sentence became more obvious to the reader and improve the flow of the manuscript.
Reviewer's report

Title: Factors associated with cancer-related fatigue in breast cancer during endocrine treatment in an urban area

Version: 6 Date: 25 May 2010

Reviewer: Christopher G Lis

Reviewer's report:

No further revisions required.