Reviewer's report

Title: Experiencing Neutropenia: Quality of Life Interviews with Adult Cancer Patients

Version: 1 Date: 23 March 2005

Reviewer: Michael Trimmel

Reviewer's report:

General

This is a qualitative research study including 34 patients receiving chemotherapy for cancer resulting in severe neutropenia. The authors conducted 100 qualitative interviews as a pilot study and analysed patients responses to neutropenia. This is an important piece of work and should be published and it will be interesting to see the results of the subsequent studies coming from this group.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Last sentence introduction: instead of “resulted in a prospective study” I would suggest “informed a prospective study”.

The first sentences in the results section could be shortened simply explaining that tables 4-8 display the frequency of symptoms mentioned during the interviews. The tables 4-8 could probably be combined into one table.

The third paragraph within the results section should be moved to the discussion, and the present results section could be shortened considerably.

The tables and results could benefit from inclusion of some additional quotes to provide more insight in patients experiences.

It should be discussed if the subsequent study underway will allow separation of symptoms associated with neutropenia compared to other side effects of chemotherapy such as low red blood cell count which is also often a result of chemotherapy and commonly associated with fatigue. The discussion could benefit from further expanding on the argument that it is important for oncology nurses to be vigilant about neutropenia and the subsequent necessity to educate patients about likely effects and possible ways to deal with neutropenia.
Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Finally, it is at present not recommended to develop further instruments measuring quality of life as several validated questionnaires are available (Levine MN, Ganz PA. J Clin Oncol 2002; 22:2215-2216). However, the use of existing validated measure of quality of life is to be recommended.

**What next?:** Accept after minor essential revisions

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.