Reviewer’s report

Title: Patients’ experience of communication and handling of symptomatic adverse events in breast cancer patients receiving adjuvant chemotherapy

Version: 0 Date: 08 May 2019

Reviewer: Sarah Markham

Reviewer's report:

The purpose of the present study was to examine patient-reported experience measure (PREM) regarding communication and handling of side effects/symptoms. I agree that inclusion of patient-reported outcomes of symptomatic toxicities is likely to provide a more sufficient picture of the patient's symptomatic adverse events from cancer treatment possibly leading to better health-related quality of life in cancer patients and better clinical outcomes. Hence it is important to explore patients' experience of communication about and handling of symptomatic toxicities, and am very glad that this study sought to conduct research on this.

The article states that 'patient representatives were involved in the development of a PREM questionnaire. More detail regarding this would have been helpful, such as whether patients were involved in choosing the four predefined themes. The adjective 'predefined' implies they weren't and it would be interesting if this is the case to know why.

I thought it was significant that the ePRO questionnaire seemed to help the patients remember their symptoms; this is a clear indicator of its value over conversations about symptoms with nurses.

It would also be of value to know more about what the study participants thought of the questionnaire itself.

I thought it was also significant that participants reported not wanting to bother the nurses with their symptoms and as a patient I can empathise with this. It is also another reason which a questionnaire can be so very helpful, as it take the possibly tired and busy professional out of the process.

It would be useful if the sentence 'The questions raised by the patient representatives in the questionnaire might not have been detailed enough to catch possible points of improvement' was unpacked and some idea given as to what possible points of improvement may have been missed. Information as to why of the planned 52 interviews, only 22 interviews were completed would be helpful.

The main conclusion of the study; that the study 'indicates a need for a more comprehensive side effect questionnaire covering more symptoms than the one used as standard procedure today', is very concrete and practical to address. Hopefully there will be further research to meet this indicated need.
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