

Exploring Fatigue

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Exploring fatigue learning outcomes

By the end of this session you should be able to:

1. Provide a description of cancer related fatigue
2. Identify the components of fatigue to better understand impact
3. Have a better awareness of the strategies you might employ personally and for your patients to identify and manage persistent fatigue



Exploring fatigue

Contents

1. Defining and exploring how common fatigue might be
2. An exploration of the components of fatigue and its impact on day to day life
3. An exploration of the strategies you might employ for your patients and you to identify and manage persistent fatigue
4. Question time



Exploring fatigue:

1. What is fatigue
2. How common is cancer related fatigue (CRF)
3. How fatigue can impact on daily life



Exploring fatigue:

1. What is fatigue: different things to different people but always multifactorial and subjectively defined (**that's OK**)
2. What is cancer related fatigue (CRF)

Definition:

*A persistent, distressing, subjective sense of **physical, emotional and or cognitive tiredness** or exhaustion related to cancer or cancer treatment, that is not proportional to recent activity and interferes with usual functioning.*

National Comprehensive Cancer Network (2011).



How common is fatigue

- We all experience ‘fatigue’ it is a ‘normal’ phenomenon and we learn how to manage and alleviate this and cope...however....
- Chronic/enduring fatigue is not normal i.e. that which persists daily and significantly in excess of 3-4/12...investigate and take care of yourself
- **How common is CRF?**
- CRF is **very common** for people living with and beyond cancer.
- However, we don’t really understand why, but we know it is commonly associated with cancer related treatments.
- Macmillan Cancer Support estimate that 75 – 90% of anyone who has had cancer will experience significant fatigue.

How common is CRF continued

When might CRF occur?

- It may be experienced before diagnosis as a symptom.
- At and around the time of diagnosis.
- During the active treatment phase.
- During the post active treatment phase and beyond.
- It is common so tell your patients *not feel guilty* if they have it!



How fatigue can impact on daily life

All aspects of life can be disrupted



How fatigue can impact on daily life

All aspects of life can be disrupted

Occupational disruption can lead to loss of sense of self, as we are what we do....if we can't do things we need want and have to do, we may lose our sense of self and feel we have lost a sense of balance in our life



Impact and Coping with Fatigue

- Dealing with fatigue can be complex
- Acknowledge this for you and your patients
- For you as practitioners: Try to identify the triggers to your fatigue: Take 5 minutes now to discuss with someone next to you what causes you to experience fatigue?
- Group discussion/feedback
- What do we notice?



What is noticed?

Fatigue can be experienced as:

- Physical (understood by self and others easily perhaps)
- Emotional NB health care practitioners
- Cognitive (perhaps less well understood/not visible)

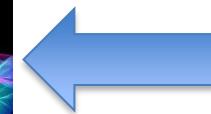
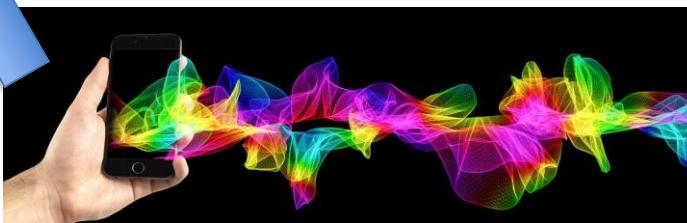
How might you tackle this issue?

- It is useful to have some awareness of your current and available energy levels
- How is this possible?



Everyday coping

It is useful to consider the metaphor of the charged/drained mobile phone



My battery

It is useful to consider the metaphor of the charged/drained mobile phone

For reasons we don't yet fully understand, your battery does not fully charge overnight...when you wake therefore you may feel unrefreshed



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Everyday coping

You can learn to recognise what **drains** your battery and what **recharges** it...but you need to take some time to do so



My battery: Consider

1. What drains the most = **high energy activity**
2. What drains but not quite so much = **low energy activity**
3. What restores your battery = **recharges you**

Remember it's about:

physical, emotional and/or cognitive fatigue

My battery: define

1. High energy activity
 2. Low energy activity
 3. Restorative activity

Use of activity, rest and sleep logs or a diary can be helpful



My battery: Consider

How to top up your battery

Physical activity of a moderate nature (get out of breath during activity but can still speak!), of 150 minutes a week, may help to reduce cancer related fatigue.

This need not be at a gym - if you don't like gyms...it can be vigorous lawn mowing or pram pushing for example!



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How to top up your battery

Any occupation/activity that is meaningful to you and makes you feel restored in some way (not sleep!)

Inject some green activity throughout the day!



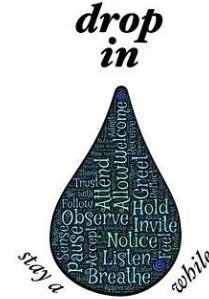
Everyday coping

- Establishing routines (use a diary perhaps to assist)
- Prioritising, planning and pacing activities
- Adopt sleep hygiene principles
- Be self compassionate
- Look after yourself
- Introduce relaxation exercises into your day
- **Most importantly – try and have some fun!**



Everyday coping

- What gets in the way of us coping and perhaps being more self-compassionate at times?
- Our sleep (or lack of it!)
- Expectations of ourselves and other people



Sleep Hygiene

- **Definition**
- **Noun**
- **habits and practices that are conducive to sleeping well on a regular basis.**



Sleep Hygiene Index

- 1. I take daytime naps lasting two or more hours.
- 2. I go to bed at different times from day to day.
- 3. I get out of bed at different times from day to day.
- 4. I exercise to the point of sweating within 1 h of going to bed.
- 5. I stay in bed longer than I should two or three times a week.
- 6. I use alcohol, tobacco, or caffeine within 4 h of going to bed or after going to bed.
- 7. I do something that may wake me up before bedtime (for example: play video games, use the internet, or clean).
- 8. I go to bed feeling stressed, angry, upset, or nervous.
- 9. I use my bed for things other than sleeping or sex (for example: watch television, read, eat, or study).
- 10. I sleep on an uncomfortable bed (for example: poor mattress or pillow, too much or not enough blankets).
- 11. I sleep in an uncomfortable bedroom (for example: too bright, too stuffy, too hot, too cold, or too noisy).
- 12. I do important work before bedtime (for example: pay bills, schedule, or study).
- 13. I think, plan, or worry when I am in bed.

Sleep Hygiene Index

The items listed in the Index can all contribute to poor sleep.

Be creative in problem solving if you have adopted any of the items listed.



Be aware of Expectations

- Fatigue will impact on your expectations to perform day to day activities?**
- Fatigue will also impact on other peoples expectations of you in terms of participation in day to day life?**



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Exploring Fatigue for Your Patients and You

- Any questions or other comments/feedback



Thanks for your input and attention today

Dr Anne Johnson

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[https://www.ruh.nhs.uk/rnhrd/patients/services/fatigue_services/index.asp?
menu_id=1&RNHRD=y](https://www.ruh.nhs.uk/rnhrd/patients/services/fatigue_services/index.asp?menu_id=1&RNHRD=y)

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