

Title: “You feel different in your body”: experiences of fatigue among children undergoing radiotherapy for cancer treatment.

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Abstract:

Purpose: The aim of this research is to examine the experience and impact of radiotherapy related fatigue in children diagnosed with solid tumours.

Design and methods: Children (n=25) and parents (n=19) participated in a semi-structured interview on the last week of radiotherapy treatment. The study sample included children who were 6 to 14 years of age, diagnosed with brain or solid tumour, and received radiotherapy as part of their treatment protocol over the period of 6 weeks. Interpretation of data was undertaken through the adoption of thematic analysis approach.

Results: Data revealed children’s experience and response to fatigue while undergoing radiotherapy. Several recurring themes arose about their experience of fatigue/tiredness while undergoing radiotherapy. Two themes and eight sub themes, namely ‘Experience of Fatigue’ (“You feel Different in your body”, Mood and Feeling, Activity and Occurrence) and ‘Response to Fatigue’ (Rest and Sleep, Activity, Mood and Concentration and Eating Habit) were identified.

Conclusions: The findings illustrated significant fatigue on activity sleep, rest and mood of children undergoing radiotherapy.

Practice implications: Monitoring and addressing fatigue and its consequences during radiotherapy treatment are essential to improve well-being of children with cancer.

Biography:

Jessy graduated from Christian Medical College, India in 1988. Obtained MSc in Child Health Nursing from the University of Madras, India in 1998 and Post Grad Diploma in Management and Finance in 2008 from RMIT, Melbourne. Has been working as a Paediatric Oncology Nurse Consultant in Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre since 2010, Paediatric Clinical Nurse Specialist in Day Oncology Unit in Royal Children’s Hospital since 2007 and currently a final year PhD student in Charles Darwin University in Australia. In addition to the clinical responsibilities Jessy works with the Cancer Council and the Oncology teams to update Policies, Protocols and Education materials.