Oncology patients self-care: Recommendations for Nursing personnel of the National Medical Center "20 de Noviembre" (November 20th)

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Abstract
Concerns shown by patients at the end of a chemotherapy cycle in face of adverse reactions are many and these are somehow controlled during hospitalization. Several useful recommendations for daily life are made upon hospital discharge.

Data validating the creation of a brochure was compiled from the application of a semi-structured survey to a random sample of 86 patients and family members of the Oncology Nursing Service in a two-year period, in addition to in-depth documental research. When evaluating the impact of the information and recommendations included in the brochure on oncology patients' life, it was found that the most common mechanism to cope with the aftermath of chemotherapy was the exchange of experiences between patients in similar or equal conditions, as these resulted successful in terms of decreasing resulting reactions to the treatment.

So far, 500 hundred brochures accompanied by a brief informative talk have been delivered to patients and their families, who have found this of much use in terms of clarifying information provided by doctors, along with useful advice and recommendations that allow them to adequately manage their ailment.

Key words. Adverse effects, chemotherapy, care, recommendations.

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INTRODUCTION.
Cancer is the third cause of death in Mexico, leading to consequent advances in antineoplastic treatment that aim at helping patients to cope with their disease or to increase their life-expectancy (Platt, 2013).

However, these medications have secondary effects that are either mediate, immediate or delayed, making it indispensible to have information that allows cancer patients to guide their self-care at the hospital or at home (Navari, 2003), conducting treatment in an integral manner so as to decrease risks and improving their quality of life.

In order to dispel doubts posed by patients at home presenting adverse reactions to chemotherapy, the brochure shows which actions are indicated according to symptoms experienced at a given moment; in addition to said therapeutic advances in the Oncology area, nurses are in the forefront of their services by providing quality and friendly care to patients throughout therapeutic follow-up (Flores, 2008).

JUSTIFICATION
Health personnel and patients must be aware of the citotoxicologic or secondary reactions of medication management.

Toxicity associated to chemotherapy is a relevant aspect that must be addressed in face of the negative influence that chemotherapy has on the quality of living of patients¹; the vital risk it may present under certain circumstances contributes to prioritizing an adequate management of information, hence the importance of having a tool ², such as the Handbook of self-care for Oncology Patients under Chemotherapy Treatment, that provides advise based on studies and scientific evidence so as to that allow patients to improve their quality of life.

The search of health self-care of people has been strengthened by scientific and technological advances, translated into considering the three bio-psycho-social spheres of
patients that require nursing services; consequently, the *Handbook of self-care for Oncology Patients under Chemotherapy Treatment* resulted from the demand observed at the Oncology Service of the National Medical Center "20 de Noviembre" and in face of the permanent concern and uncertainty referred by patients after a chemotherapy cycle once at home, and in presence of certain reaction of the treatment itself.

The brochure was designed to dispel doubts while also providing practical, convenient and easy-to-understand recommendations for patients and their families, as the approach of each technique includes a corresponding theoretical basis, concepts, objectives, precautions and required skills for implementation, along with an evaluation of patients related to health self-care and results expected after procedures have taken place³.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This research work was conducted as an important number of patients had doubts in relation to possible reactions after each chemotherapy session, regardless of the explanation offered by their treating physician; given the short amount of time and terminology used by doctors to explain this process, patients and their families had doubts that lead them to exchange strategies regarding actions to avoid nausea or vomit, for instance, in relation to food⁴,⁵.

Therefore, the creation of a Handbook was proposed to the Chief of Nursing Services, including each adverse reaction⁶,⁷,⁸ presented in most patients, as well as, how to proceed and what to avoid so as to not worsen the health of patients⁹, ¹⁰, ¹¹, ¹²; the final product of this task is the *Handbook of self-care for Oncology Patients under Chemotherapy Treatment*.

The general objective is to improve the quality of life of patients¹³ that experience adverse reactions at home, resulting from chemotherapy, through an informational brochure that explains how to address them, based on an in-depth bibliographic and hemerographic review, as well as, on exploratory documental research.
The mechanisms used to compile data that validated the elaboration of the Brochure were a semi-structured survey with a random sample of 86 patients and relatives of the Oncologic Nursing Service during a two-year period, along with in-depth review of specialized materials; the results showed that the most common mechanism to face abovementioned problems was the exchange of successful experiences for the decrease of reactions brought about by chemotherapy.

The interviewed sample expressed that the exchange of said information is related to the type of food consumed without resulting in adverse reactions, environmental conditions that made patients more comfortable, how to palliate the disease symptoms at home, among others.

The first draft of the Brochure was designed based on data obtained through the survey and documental research, which was later sent to hospital authorities for their review and validation, and once approved, sponsorship was requested to GlaxoSmithKline laboratory to make the corresponding print-run.

The Handbook of self-care for Oncology Patients under Chemotherapy Treatment was structured in fifteen pages, presenting the following issues: alopecia, mucositis and stomatitis, xerostomy, nausea and vomit, asthenia or fatigue, relaxation exercises, general pain, anemia, fever or infection, petechiae or bruising, peripheral neuropathy, skin, nails, sensitivity to sunlight, constipation, diarrhea, effects on sexuality, vein care, make-up, insomnia and the emotional aspect; in these sections, the cancer patient and his relatives will find advise and recommendations.

RESULTS AND DEBATE
A total of 500 hundred brochures have been handed to patients and their families accompanied by a brief information talk, which has been found of great use to clarify
information provided by doctors, along with useful advise and recommendations for an adequate handling of their disease.

The Brochure aims at providing innovative and transforming knowledge based on the reality of patients. This is why this material was well received by patients and their families as its structure is understandable and as it uses simple terminology that can be understood by patients.

A new review of contents is under process, as the last interviews conducted have provided information that may lead to the improvement of the material, which may have an impact on care of patients after chemotherapy, decrease of adverse effects, among other recommendations.

The purpose of this document is to facilitate knowledge and action measures for cancer patients based on the dissemination of care at home, so as to maintain an optimum health state and avoiding complications; this goal has been achieved as through the Handbook of self-care for Oncology Patients under Chemotherapy Treatment, it has been possible to significantly dispel the doubts of patients thus propitiating a better quality of life and larger emotional well-being through recommendations presented.
BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES


