Managing the Oral Effects of Cancer Treatment: Diagnosis to Survivorship

Edited by

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Recognizing that our patients travel many different paths during their oncology experience, oncology nurses are blessed to be their traveling companion. For my husband, who has traveled many of my professional paths, I now travel with him down his own cancer path. May this clinical information help us and others improve our care for patients dealing with oral oncology problems as they face their treatments.

—Marilyn Louise Younghouse Haas, PhD, CNS, ANP-BC

This book was inspired by my work caring for children with cancer. I hope it improves the care of both pediatric and adult patients who are dealing with the oral effects of cancer. I dedicate this book to my husband, Joe, the man whom I am blessed to have as a husband. I would like to thank him for his daily love and support.

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The contributors provided the following disclosure and vested interest information:
- Marilyn L. Haas, PhD, CNS, ANP-BC: MedPharma and Meniscus Educational Institute, honoraria
- Carrie F. Daly, RN, MS, AOCN®: Roche, consultant; IMER, honoraria
- Vanna M. Dest, MSN, APRN, BC, AOCN®: EUSA Pharma and Myriad Laboratories, honoraria
- Pamela Hallquist Viale, RN, MS, CS, ANP, AOCNP®: Meniscus Educational Institute and Novartis, consultant; Amgen, Bristol-Myers Squibb, IMER, Meniscus Educational Institute, Merck, and Novartis, honoraria
- M. Renee Yanke, ARNP, MN, AOCN®: Novartis, consultant, honoraria
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Preface

The mouth is a “mirror”: the oral cavity can reflect the general health of a patient and reveal toxicities from oncology treatments.

Oral diseases may not be life threatening, but they can have systemic effects and greatly affect a person’s quality of life. Oral cancers can be devastating, and the toxicities from oncology treatments can compound problems already experienced by patients who suffer from poor oral health and periodontal diseases. Concomitant high-dose radiation therapy and chemotherapy (targeted therapies) improves locoregional control of cancers but increases toxicities. Oral health becomes one of the primary responsibilities of the entire multidisciplinary team. Healthcare providers should employ interventions that prevent oral problems or anticipate oral side effects and be aggressive in treating the problems so as to not delay or interrupt therapy. Once the patient has completed therapy, follow-up over time is extremely important to maintain oral health.

This is the first oncology textbook available to guide physicians, nurse practitioners/physician assistants, and nurses who care for patients with cancer through the management of oral health problems. Comprehensive information about evidence-based principles and practice guidelines in caring for the oncology patient who has developed oral problems is presented. Managing the Oral Effects of Cancer Treatment: Diagnosis to Survivorship begins with an in-depth discussion about the fundamental skills of oral assessment and dental hygiene, treatment side effects as they relate to the oral cavity, management strategies, and insight into survivorship issues.

Initial chapters will discuss general overall oral health care, explain the necessary fundamental skills to perform a comprehensive oral assessment, and explain oral side effects from oncology treatments. Evidence-based tools to describe the progress back toward oral health will be shared. The second section will discuss management strategies to improve nutrition status, identify advantages of cytoprotection interventions, and gain control over pain issues. Speech therapy resources, complementary therapies, and an innovative mini-oral clinic will be discussed to improve the patient’s tolerance with on-
ology treatments. Finally, the third section will provide in-depth insight into survivorship issues, sexuality, changing eating habits, psychosocial issues, older adult and pediatric challenges, recurrent cancers, and a symptom cluster model of care.

This textbook shares the efforts of many authors to synthesize scientific information to support patients toward better oral health care. Applying oral healthcare principles will improve the quality of care for patients with cancer.