

Title

The prevalence and control of symptoms in elderly with incurable cancer: instrument development and validation.

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1) Introduction

Insight in symptom prevalence and symptom control in the elderly with incurable cancer is lacking.

2) Aim

Development and validation of an instrument to collect data on symptom prevalence and symptom control in the elderly with incurable cancer.

3) Method

This study consisted of two phases. In the first phase domains and items were identified based on an extensive literature review. The initial set of items was validated by a Delphi procedure including a panel of 11 experts in oncology, palliative care and/or geriatric care. Face- and content validity of the preliminary instrument was assessed. The experts were invited to evaluate all domains and items on clarity of wording and relevance. Relevance was quantified according to the Item Content Validity Index (I-CVI, target value > 0.8).

4) Results

The instrument to collect data on symptoms contained 58 items and enables to measure frequency and intensity of (1) physical, (2) psychological, (3) social, and (4) existential symptoms. The instrument to collect data on interventions consisted of 86 items and has a focus on eight symptoms: (1) pain, (2) nausea, (3) vomiting, (4) dyspnoea, (5) obstipation, (6) cachexia, (7) fatigue, and (8) depression. The I-CVI of the included items was > 0.8 and resulted in a final inclusion of 40 items in each instrument. To assess clarity of wording for the aimed population, the validated instrument on symptoms was pilot tested in a sample of ten geriatric patients.

5) Conclusion

This study resulted in two validated instruments, which will be used to assess symptom prevalence and symptom control in the elderly with incurable cancer. These instruments will be used to acquire knowledge about frequency and intensity of symptoms and interventions aimed at controlling these symptoms.