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Thesis Title  
Alternative analytical methods for the identification of cancer-related symptom clusters

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Citation  
As cancer patients often experience multiple symptoms, analytical approaches to identify symptom clusters for improved symptom management were investigated, based on the Theory of Unpleasant Symptoms. Common factor analysis methods were identified as best practice approaches to investigate symptom inter-relationships, and determined consistent symptom clusters for patients after chemotherapy commenced, and at six and twelve months, suggesting symptom management priorities. In contrast to similar studies, clusters were determined from structure rather than pattern coefficients. Five symptom clusters consistently identified over time were: Musculoskeletal-discomforts/lethargy, Oral-discomforts, Gastrointestinal-discomforts, Vasomotor-symptoms and Gastrointestinal-toxicities. At twelve months, two additional clusters were Lethargy and Gastrointestinal/digestive-symptoms. The potential of this research is to identify interventions for treatment efficiencies, reduced side-effects and improved patient outcomes. Future longitudinal studies should implement advanced analyses to investigate change in symptom clusters, the influence of patient related factors, and the impact of symptom clusters on patient outcomes over time.