A Systematic Review of Nonpharmacologic Interventions for Treatment-Related Symptoms in Women With Ovarian Cancer

Lorie L. Davis, MSN, RN, OCN®, and Janet S. Carpenter, PhD, RN, FAAN

Background: Women with ovarian cancer have a continued high symptom burden in comparison to other cancer survivors secondary to ongoing chemotherapy treatment. Prolonged or ineffective management of treatment-related symptoms can contribute to treatment noncompliance, worsening of symptoms, and reduced health-related quality of life.

Objectives: This review of the literature was conducted to describe experimental and quasi-experimental research addressing nonpharmacologic interventions for the treatment-related symptoms of sleep disturbance, pain, anxiety, depression, and low energy or fatigue in women with ovarian cancer and to critique the quality of interventions.

Methods: A systematic search of the literature was conducted in PubMed and yielded 136 articles. Eight articles met the inclusion criteria and were evaluated.

Findings: Nonpharmacologic interventions for treatment-related symptoms were complex, with an average of 4.4 components. Intervention delivery, setting, and exposure varied widely across studies. Only three studies contained details sufficient to replicate the intervention. Lack of clarity in intervention reporting may explain perceptions of clinically ineffectual symptom management in this context. Greater attention to reporting would facilitate better translation of interventions into practice and when addressing complex cancer symptom clusters.