

Newsletter

Year 3, Issue1, June 2021

Chemo brain – cancer survivor's nightmare (Editorial)

This newsletter presents a unique issue that has become a global problem and, addressing it has become a high priority. Chemo brain – a word that goes with mental derangement after chemotherapy, has become a topic that needs introspection.

The rising importance of the disorder stems from the fact that the patients find it difficult to take decisions regarding their own health matters. The quality of life post treatment is majorly compromised.

Cancer patients are often found with cognitive impairments after their respective treatments. It is addressed as chemo brain or chemo fog. It is commonly seen in cancer patients, however not always a result of chemotherapy or radiation therapy, but necessarily found in cancer patients.

The first incidence of this problem was discovered in the 1980s. During that era, the cancer patient's survival span started to increase, and a new set of symptoms started to show up, namely cognitive impairment. This was studied by oncologists, and since 1997, it has been termed as Chemo brain. Since then, the Chemo brain has been introduced into the mainstream of cancer studies, and a lot of research has gone into it.

Cognitive impairment is seen in the form of memory loss, low attention span, focusing problem, or inability to multitasking. The duration of these symptoms may vary according to the effects of cancer treatment and the number of cycles undergone. Symptoms may differ from patient to patient. Chemo brain is mainly related to chemotherapy, but these symptoms may arise with other treatments also like radiation, hormonal therapy, etc.

Ayurveda considers that the adverse effects on the brain are primarily caused by its effects on the mind. Such effects are often seen after the diagnosis, during the treatment, and even after the treatment are stopped. A lasting impact of the deteriorating effect of many chemo medicines is seen on the patients.

Rasayu Cancer Clinic offers Rasayanas and Rasakalpas as a treatment on the mind. This could be offered before the chemotherapy begins in anticipation of such a possibility, during the treatment as the problems are observed, or even after the cycles are over, in order to control the late effects over a period of time.

The most significant part for cancer patients is decision making in terms of the choice of treatment that they would opt for. Patients are unable to take such decisions, and it becomes a laborious ordeal. Rasayanas help to restore their state of mind besides also addressing the cancer of the patient.

This edition of the newsletter, presents the potential contribution of Ayurveda and plans to explore possibilities of what the modern medicines and research, testimonials, and other explanations have to offer to address this problem.

-Dr Yogesh Bendale
Chairman & Managing Director (Rasayu Group)

Chemo brain – cancer survivor's challenge

Many cancer patients show cognitive impairments after cancer treatment which is called chemo brain. It is also called chemo fog. It may occur during treatment or after cancer treatment. Cognitive impairment may be memory loss, low attention, focus problem or unable to do multiple things at a time. Symptoms may be seen for short term or long term according to the effect of cancer treatment. Symptoms may differ from patients to patients but need immediate attention. Chemo brain is mainly connected with chemotherapy, but these symptoms may come after other treatment also like radiation, hormonal therapy, etc.

According to one study of the renowned Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre, around 17% to 75% of breast cancer survivors showed cognitive impairment like attention, loss of concentration, memory after receiving chemotherapy from 6 months to 20 years. Mostly chemo brain is seen in brain related cancer, but it may occur in other cancer also. Other risk factors may include cancer diagnosis at a young age, radiation to the brain and spinal cord, a potency of chemo and radiation, etc. cognitive rehabilitation, exercise, and mediation may help to recover from chemo brain accompanying modern treatment. There is great hope that complimentary alternative therapy (CAM) like Ayurved has the best solutions to chemo brain. Many cancer survivors are enjoying life without any chemo brain symptoms after Rasayana therapy.

Dr. Pravin Gund

* The author has been active in the field of Ayurveda for over 13 years and is associated with Rasayu Group for over a decade as a Senior Physician and as Media and Communications Coordinator.

Understanding the Signs and symptoms of chemo brain

The symptoms of the chemo brain can be elaborated as

Cognitive dysfunction

- Feeling of mental foggy/ Mental Cloudiness- Physical and or mental fatigue, Not thinking clearly, anxious, can't figure things out
- Short attention span
- Difficulty concentrating-(they can't focus on what they're doing, have a short attention span, may "space out")
- Confusion - impacts on daily life, difficulty in driving, following directions, etc.

Memory related difficulties

- Memory lapses-Forgetting things that they usually have no trouble remembering
- Short-term memory problems
- Trouble with verbal memory, such as remembering a conversation(unable to find the right words to finish a sentence)
- Trouble with visual memory, such as recalling an image or list of words
- Trouble remembering details like names, dates, and sometimes larger events
- Trouble multi-tasking, like answering the phone while cooking, without losing track of one task (they're less able to do more than one thing at a time)

Newsletter

Year 3, Issue1, June 2021

Work difficulties

- Taking longer time than usual to complete routine tasks
- Trouble multi-tasking, like answering the phone while cooking, without losing track of one task (they're less able to do more than one thing at a time)
- Taking a longer time to finish things (disorganized, slower thinking and processing)

Dr. Poonam Birari

*The author is a senior Ayurveda physician with an added qualification in Medical Research at Rasayu Cancer clinic since 2014.

Chemo brain- What Research Says?

Chemotherapy is found to be beneficial in treating cancer in earlier stages and also in increasing the survival rate of patients with advanced stage cancers. However, chemotherapy has several toxicities associated with it, and such treatment can induce acute or long-term cognitive dysfunction, a phenomenon known as post-chemotherapy cognitive impairment (PCCI) or "chemo brain." Chemo brain can cause symptoms like confusion, difficulty concentrating, difficulty finding the right word, difficulty learning new skills, difficulty multitasking, feeling of mental foggy, short attention span, short-term memory problems, etc.

Rasayana therapy has a great role in improving cognitive functions and improving symptoms of the chemo brain. Various research studies conducted at Rasayu cancer clinic have demonstrated that Rasayana therapy has a very positive effect on psychological wellbeing and emotional quality of life. Rasayana therapy for a short interval like 4 to 6 weeks have shown to produce statistically significant improvement in cognitive functions of cancer patients.

Besides Rasayana therapy, physical activity like yoga and mild exercise also plays an important role in the management of Chemo brain. Various Integrative oncology research groups have conducted research studies on the effect of exercise, yoga, and meditation in improving cognitive functions in patients receiving chemotherapy. Regular exercise is known to positively affect brain function. Mild to moderate physical exercise have been shown to attenuated impairments in cognitive function, neuroplasticity, and mitochondrial function. Studies have indicated that low-intensity exercise may assist in preventing cognitive dysfunction during or after chemotherapy in patients with various cancers. The practice of Yoga has also shown a decrease in nausea and emesis frequency and severity. Also, it shows decrease in anxiety and depression. Regular practice of yoga has also led to significantly reduce the levels of salivary cortisol, which is a stress hormone and is elevated in conditions of stress.

To summarise, Chemotherapy has its own advantages and disadvantages. Your Onco-physician is the best person to decide your eligibility for chemotherapy. In case chemotherapy is suitable

for you Rasayana therapy along with Yoga and mild physical activity can help you to prevent /treat cognitive dysfunctions like Chemo brain.

Dr. Avinash Kadam

* The author is a Pharmaceutical physician by Qualification and is working as a senior clinical research scientist in Rasayani Biologics Pvt Ltd. He has more than 15 years of experience in clinical research on various complementary and alternative medicines like Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy.

Management of Chemobrain at Rasayu Cancer Clinic

Chemotherapy-induced cognitive impairment is known as 'Chemobrain'. With an increasing number of cancer survivors, the issue of chemobrain has become a serious concern. About 20-30% of the cancer survivors are supposed to face this issue which affects their quality of life to a great extent.

Management of Chemobrain

At Rasayu Cancer Clinic, such kind of patients are given the following treatments in addition to their regular medications-

1. Medicines- According to Ayurveda, chemobrain is a result of vitiation of Vatadosha, which results in degenerative changes. So, for the pacification of vitiated Vatadosha, certain medications are available. Medicines containing gold in nano form (Rasayanas) seem to be very effective in the management of symptoms associated with chemobrain. These help to calm the brain and nervous system. All these medicines are available in an oral form which is easy to take.

2. Panchkarma (Detox) treatments-

A. Basti (Medicated enema)- In this, medicated oils and decoctions are administered through the anal route. Medicines used may vary from patient to patient as per their individual clinical need.

B. Snehan (External application)-The application of medicated oils externally also helps to relax the body.

C. Shiropichu- In this form of treatment, medicated oils are applied over the head. This also helps in regulating sleep patterns.

D. Nasya- Some medicated oils are instilled in nostrils and then inhaled forcibly.

All these panchakarma treatments remove toxins, helps in the pacification of Vatadosha, relieves stress, establish sleep pattern, and helps to maintain distressed condition.

3. Pranayama and Yogasan- Deep breathing exercises and various postures of Yogasan relieve stress and help to improve cognitive functions if practiced properly under the guidance of experts.

4. Dietary advice- Some food items or diet habits, if practiced regularly are supposed to produce metabolic toxins. Such types of food items are usually asked to avoid. Patients are advocated to increase the use of food articles that are healthy, easy to digest, and helps to reduce the effects of chemobrain.

5. Counselling- Counseling of patients also plays an important role in managing some special conditions and maintaining a positive attitude in patients.

Dr. Anand Patil

*The author is a qualified Ayurvedic oncologist and is working as a senior physician at Rasayu Cancer Clinic and has more than 6 years of experience in treating cancer patients.

Editorial Support : Dr Avinash Kadam and

Published by Rasayu Cancer Clinic, B1 Amrutkumbh, Laxmi Park Society, Navi Peth, Pune 411030 for internal circulation.

Contact : care@rasayucancerclinic.com, www.rasayucancerclinic.com Ph. No : 020 24532525/24537149

Disclaimer : This document is for internal use only. Though all efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of the content in this newsletter, the organization and the editorial board gives no warranty, representation or undertaking on whether expressed or implied, nor does it assume any legal liability, whether direct or indirect, or responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any information.