Sexuality, Menopausal Symptoms, and Quality of Life in Premenopausal Women in the First Year Following Hematopoietic Cell Transplantation

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Hematopoietic cell transplantation (HCT) is an aggressive curative therapy for a number of malignant and nonmalignant diseases. The number of HCTs performed each year in the United States is about 18,000, and about 150,000 individuals are five or more years post-HCT (Horowitz, 2005; Pasquini & Zhu, 2014). In summarizing quality-of-life (QOL) research among recipients of HCT, Syrjala and Artherholt (2004) reported that the majority experience good to excellent QOL; however, about 5%–20% report ongoing problems, including alterations in sexual health. Sexual dissatisfaction and dysfunction were reported in QOL studies beginning in the 1990s (Baker et al., 1994; Wingard, Curbow, Baker, Zabora, & Piantadosi, 1992). The prevalence of altered sexuality in women following HCT has been reported to be as high as 80% (Syrjala, Kurland, Abrams, Sanders, & Heiman, 2008), and several studies have reported that sexual dysfunctions are more prevalent in female recipients of HCT (Humphreys, Tallman, Altmaier, & Barnette, 2007; Syrjala et al., 1998, 2008; Wong et al., 2013). Alterations in sexuality can persist for years, resulting in diminished QOL for the recipient of HCT, as well as for his or her sexual partner. A mandate from professional organizations, including the Oncology Nursing Society, the Institute of Medicine, and the National Comprehensive Cancer Network, addresses the QOL concerns of survivors (Brant & Wickham, 2013; Hewitt, Greenfield, & Stovall, 2006; Holland & Reznik, 2005).

Background

The World Health Organization (2002) has stated that sexuality is an integral component of the human experience. Sexuality is a multidimensional construct with physiologic, psychological, and social dimensions and complex interactions among these dimensions. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders describes sexual dysfunction as a clinically significant disruption in an individual’s ability to respond sexually or experience sexual pleasure (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). These disorders are characterized by physiologic or psychological changes that negatively...