Symptom Burden and Self-Advocacy

Exploring the relationship among female cancer survivors

Teresa L. Hagan, PhD, RN, Stephanie Gilbertson-White, PhD, APRN-BC, Susan M. Cohen, PhD, CRNP, FAAN, Jennifer S. Temel, MD, Joseph A. Greer, PhD, and Heidi S. Donovan, PhD, RN

BACKGROUND: Although patient self-advocacy is a critical component of patient-centered care, the association between symptom burden and self-advocacy has received little attention.

OBJECTIVES: This analysis evaluates the degree to which self-advocacy is associated with symptom burden among women with a history of cancer.

METHODS: Participants completed online or paper questionnaires. Descriptive statistics and ordinary least squares regression models were used to analyze the association between the three dimensions of self-advocacy and two dimensions of symptom burden: symptom severity and interference.

FINDINGS: Participants reported moderate levels of symptom burden. Fatigue, disturbed sleep, and memory problems were most common. Informed decision making was positively associated with symptom burden and participants’ burden across the three most severe symptoms. Effective communication was negatively associated with total symptom burden and the degree to which symptoms interfered with daily life.

KEYWORDS
self-advocacy; symptom burden; effective communication; decision making

DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER
10.1188/18.CJON.E23-E30