

# Promoting Adherence to Skin Care Practices Among Patients Receiving Radiation Therapy

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**Background:** The effects of radiation on the skin are particularly troublesome for patients and can result in impaired quality of life and an inability to perform activities of daily living. Skin care during radiation therapy is needed to prevent and treat radiation dermatitis. Patient adherence to prescribed skin care protocols is paramount to an optimal outcome but not always monitored closely.

**Objectives:** The focus of this study was to optimize patient adherence to the Oncology Nursing Society's Putting Evidence Into Practice recommendations for skin care during radiation therapy.

**Methods:** A multidimensional approach was used to enhance adherence to the skin care protocol. Outcomes measured included adherence, patient satisfaction, and skin condition.

**Findings:** Five interacting dimensions affect adherence: health-system, socioeconomic, therapy-related, patient-related, and condition-related factors. Self-reported adherence to the washing and moisturizing protocol from treatment week 4 through treatment week 7 was high. Implementation of the skin care protocol introduced in this study has led to a statistically significant decrease in the level of skin toxicity.

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Key words: radiation dermatitis; adherence; 4MATing; patient education

Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/15.CJON.196-203

Radiation therapy is a key treatment modality for patients with cancer; however, the effects of radiation on the skin are particularly troublesome for patients and can result in impaired quality of life and an inability to perform activities of daily living (Feight, Baney, Bruce, & McQuestion, 2011). Skin care during radiation therapy is needed to prevent and treat radiation dermatitis.

Patient adherence to prescribed skin care protocols is necessary for an optimal outcome. Many studies have investigated the use of different skin care products (Abbas & Bensadoun, 2012; Falkowski, Trouillas, Duroux, Bonnetblanc, & Clavere, 2010; Miller et al., 2011; Pinnix et al., 2012; Sharp et al., 2012), but little attention has been given to promoting adherence to prescribed skin care protocols. The purpose of this evidence-based practice project was to optimize patient adherence to the Oncology Nursing Society's (ONS's) Putting Evidence Into Practice (PEP) recommendations for skin care during radiation

therapy (Feight et al., 2011). To achieve this purpose, the skin care protocol and all related teaching material used at the authors' National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated comprehensive cancer center were standardized for patients receiving radiation therapy for head and neck cancer. The current article provides an initial report of the effectiveness of the new skin care and teaching protocols after participation of 30 patients, which is the midpoint of data collection. Effectiveness was evaluated in three areas: (a) adherence to the prescribed skin care protocol, (b) patient satisfaction with instruction about the skin care protocol, and (c) skin condition observed during radiation therapy

## Review of the Literature

About 95% of patients who receive radiation will develop some degree of radiation dermatitis (Feight et al., 2011). Grade 1