

Strengthening the Circle of Care: Integrative Management of Cachexia, Cancer-Related Fatigue, and Caregiver Wellness

Heidi Weinhold ND

Purpose/Background

Cancer cachexia affects approximately one-third of all cancer patients and up to 80% of those with advanced disease, contributing to reduced treatment tolerance, diminished quality of life, and decreased survival. Cancer-related fatigue (CRF) is the most prevalent symptom experienced by oncology patients, affecting more than 80% of individuals undergoing chemotherapy or radiation therapy. Both conditions significantly impair physical function and psychosocial well-being. In addition, caregivers frequently experience substantial emotional, physical, and financial burdens that adversely affect both caregiver health and patient outcomes. This poster highlights evidence-informed integrative strategies to address cachexia, CRF, and caregiver wellness within a whole-person oncology care model.

Methods/Concept

An evidence-informed review of the integrative oncology literature was conducted to identify clinical approaches for the assessment and management of cancer cachexia, CRF, and caregiver burden. The poster integrates current research with clinical experience to present practical recommendations for standardized assessment, nutrition, physical activity, restorative rest, stress management, and selected integrative therapies. Emphasis is placed on the safe integration of nutraceuticals, botanicals, and homeopathic medicines alongside conventional oncology treatment, including consideration of potential herb-drug and supplement-drug interactions.

Results/Description

The poster presents a practical framework for evaluating and managing cachexia and CRF using validated assessment tools and individualized integrative care plans. Evidence supporting nutrition interventions, omega-3 fatty acids, curcumin, branched-chain amino acids, selected botanicals, restorative movement, and sleep optimization is summarized. Clinical guidance is provided for selecting high-quality supplements and incorporating lifestyle interventions into oncology practice. A dedicated section addresses caregiver wellness, including strategies to reduce stress, improve resilience, and prevent burnout through nutrition, restorative movement, relaxation techniques, and integrative therapies. Clinical pearls derived from the presenters' combined expertise in integrative oncology and caregiver support illustrate real-world implementation.

Conclusions/Significance

Cancer cachexia, CRF, and caregiver distress are interrelated challenges that require comprehensive, multidisciplinary management. Integrative oncology offers practical, evidence-informed approaches that complement conventional cancer treatment while addressing nutrition, function, symptom burden, and caregiver resilience. By providing clinicians with actionable assessment tools and whole-person interventions, this model has the potential to improve patient quality of life, strengthen caregiver well-being, and enhance supportive oncology care across diverse clinical settings