

The Use of Antidepressants for Physical and Psychological Symptoms in Cancer

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Abstract

Cancer patients are commonly associated with various physical and psychological symptoms. In palliative setting, the aims are to relieve those symptoms, improve quality of life, and increase medication adherence among cancer patients. Antidepressants are generally accepted for the treatment of depression among patients with or without cancer. Some other potential benefits of the antidepressants have been reported in cancer patients.

Objective: This study aims to review the use of antidepressants for physical and psychological symptoms in cancer patients.

Results: Our findings showed the mixed result of positive and negative findings in various symptoms associated with cancer patients. These studies are categorised according to the hierarchy of evidence from high to low level, namely randomised controlled trials, cohort studies, case-control studies, case series, case reports, as well as other type of publications. The majority of antidepressants used in cancer patients seem to be beneficial for the treatment of depression, anxiety, hot flashes and other symptoms such as sexual dysfunction, fatigue, nicotine dependence, vasomotor symptoms, executive functions, sleep problems, pruritus, as well as for hypochondriasis. While fluoxetine was found to be associated with the reduction of antiemetic property in ondansetron, mirtazapine was identified to be a good alternative in treating nausea and cachexia among cancer patients.

Conclusion: More research studies with adequate statistical power are warranted to validate the use of antidepressants among cancer patients in treating these physical and psychological symptoms.

Keywords




Author Keywords: Antidepressant; depression; anxiety; nausea; cachexia; hot flashes; pain; cancer  
KeyWords Plus: QUALITY-OF-LIFE; SEROTONIN REUPTAKE-INHIBITORS; MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDER; PLACEBO-CONTROLLED TRIAL; RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED-TRIAL; PAIN FOLLOWING TREATMENT; STAGE BREAST-CANCER; PHASE-II TRIAL; HOT-FLASHES; DOUBLE-BLIND

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