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TITLE: Cognitive Performance, Quality of Life, and Psychosocial Adjustment Among Men Receiving Androgen Deprivation Therapy for Treatment of Prostate Cancer

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Animal models and naturalistic studies of androgen decline in aging men suggest that low testosterone levels contribute to cognitive difficulties. Suppression of testosterone by androgen deprivation therapy (ADT) is the preferred treatment for advanced prostate cancer (PC) and in recent years has been increasingly prescribed for treatment of early stage PC. Although many of the side effects of ADT are well documented, potential cognitive impairment associated with ADT has been neglected in the literature. Our preexisting data indicate that 35% of men receiving ADT report moderate to severe difficulties with attention, concentration, and memory. In addition to normal age-related declines in cognitive function, men receiving ADT may experience hormone-related cognitive impairments that remain undetected and untreated. This study describes the nature and prevalence of objectively assessed cognitive difficulties in PC patients treated with ADT, examines the relationship between subjective reports of cognitive impairment and objective measurement of cognitive performance, and assesses relationships among fatigue, psychological distress, and cognitive function. Preliminary results show that 58% of the men have cognitive deficits > 1 SD below age- and education-adjusted population norms in one or more cognitive domains, and 92% have at least one area of performance > 1 SD below expected functioning based on estimated premorbid IQ.
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Introduction
This project is an individual postdoctoral training grant in prostate cancer. The project involves focused mentorship and training in all aspects of prostate cancer, including psychosocial and quality of life issues. The training plan includes opportunities for secondary data analyses as well as an original research project focusing on neurocognitive sequelae of androgen deprivation therapy (ADT). Suppression of testosterone by androgen deprivation therapy is the preferred treatment for advanced prostate cancer (PC) and in recent years has been increasingly prescribed for treatment of early stage PC. Although many of the side effects of ADT have been well-documented, potential cognitive impairment associated with ADT has been neglected in the literature. In our preexisting pilot data, 35% of men receiving ADT reported moderate to severe difficulties with attention, concentration, and memory, suggesting that in addition to normal age-related declines in cognitive function, men receiving ADT may experience hormone-related cognitive impairments that remain undetected and untreated. The present study describes the nature and prevalence of objectively assessed cognitive difficulties in PC patients treated with ADT, examines the relationship between subjective reports of cognitive impairment and objective measurement of cognitive performance, and assesses relationships among fatigue, psychological distress, quality of life (QoL), and cognitive function.

Body
This project is received notice of award on October 31st, 2002 and notification of final approval on March 1st, 2003 stating that the grant contract was signed and scheduled to begin on April 1st, 2003. Preparation for training and research began immediately after the final notification. A list of training and research activities in accord with the original proposal and Statement of Work follows.

Research Progress:
• Initiated start-up meeting with mentors during April. Meet regularly with Drs. Vaughn, Plotkin (now Plotkin -Beister), and Coyne to discuss the research project, current literature, and strategies for future work, presentations, and publications.
• Completed training in neuropsychological assessment and scoring for the specific measures used in this project and consult regularly with Dr. Beister on interpretation of test results.
• Hired and trained research assistant and implemented participant tracking and data management procedures.
• The research project proposed as part of my training is underway. To date we have accrued 19 participants, including 16 men receiving ADT and 3 non ADT controls. We are continuing to accrue patients through Dr. Vaughn’s practice and, in an effort to include a greater diversity of men with PC, will now extend recruitment into the larger Penn and Philadelphia communities, including the Veterans Affairs Hospital.
Education and Career Development:

- The abstract for this training grant was accepted for presentation at the March 9th, 2003 American Society for Preventative Oncology New Investigators Workshop. I presented the training goals and background, rational, and research design of this project, as well as plans for a follow-up study to the senior investigator panel of Patricia Ganz, William Redd, and Alfred Nuegot.

- Attended the newly organized Philadelphia Area Prostate Research (PAPR) Collaborative quarterly meetings from March 2003 to present in order to meet and interact with senior investigators involved in prostate cancer research. This group includes representatives from University of Pennsylvania, Fox Chase Cancer Center, Thomas Jefferson University Cancer Center, and the Lankenua Institute for Medical Research.


- Attended March 2003 Society of Behavioral Medicine Post-Meeting Seminar: *Development and Implementation of a Psychosocial Oncology Program*, March 23rd, 2003. This program focused on: 1) Critical research and applied issues in psycho-oncology, including primary and secondary prevention, genetic screening, adaptation to cancer, cancer-related fatigue, and cancer-related pain. 2) Pragmatic issues in developing a research and assessment unit, including clinical and neuropsychological assessment and mental health screening, medical staff referral, barriers to referral, and intervention strategies. 3) Measurement issues and appropriate instrumentation to reduce patient burden. 4) Professional issues, including educating medical staff about psychosocial and research issues and educating the psycho-oncology team about medical issues.

- Attended monthly Grand Rounds in Psychiatry, Neuropsychiatry, and Oncology, as well as regular meetings of the Behavioral Oncology Group of the Division of Cancer Control and Outcomes.

- Attended University of Pennsylvania's Interdisciplinary Retreat on Neuroprotection and the Mahoney Institute of Neuroscience Symposium on Brain Research: *From Molecules to Mind*. Relevant talks included presentations on neural substrates of memory and of emotions.

- Attended the NCI Behavioral Research Program sponsored conference, *The Science of Real Time Data Capture: Self-Reports in Health Research*, September 5-7th, 2003. This intensive conference included presentations on design issues, methodology, and statistical challenges unique to ecological momentary assessment (EMA) and electronic diary studies, as well as focused workshops on practical issues implementing EMA studies. My ideas for EMA of cognitive failure events, affect, and fatigue were well received in the workshop, and I am currently working on a design to implement this procedure in men with PC. EMA will allow greater understanding of the specific cognitive difficulties men encounter in daily life and the context in which such events occur.
**Key Research Accomplishments**

- Secondary data analyses of Dr. Coyne’s existing PC database resulted in a first authored paper that is now in press in the journal *Psycho-Oncology*. Overall, results suggest that PC patients on ADT prefer individualized informational support, especially information about treatment and treatment related side-effects. Few participants were interested in psychosocial support, but those who did express interest in psychosocial services were younger and had a shorter duration of ADT. There was substantial interest in Oncolink, an internet-based informational resource, suggesting that the Internet may provide an acceptable mode of service delivery. We recommend that health care providers integrate increased informational support into routine care and consider patient preferences in prioritizing and designing support services.

- Preliminary results of the Prostate Cancer Cognitive Performance (PCCP) study described in the training grant have been presented at the Society of Behavioral Medicine 2004 annual meeting as part of a symposium on quality life in prostate cancer and as a poster at the Abramson Cancer Center’s Eunice and Irving Leopold Annual Scientific Symposium and Retreat on March 31st 2004. An updated poster with the most recent participants and data analyses will be presented at the July 2004 American Psychological Association annual convention as part of the Division 38 Health Psychology program.

**Publications and Presentations:**


Invited Talks:


**Reportable Outcomes**
• Preliminary results of the ongoing PCCP study show that 58% of the men had cognitive deficits ≥ 1SD below age- and education-adjusted population norms in one or more cognitive domains and 92% had at least one area of performance ≥ 1SD below expected functioning based on estimated premorbid IQ. Self-reports of poor cognitive function were related to increased psychological distress and decreased physical and emotional QOL. Although 83% of men reported some cognitive difficulties, cognitive complaints were unrelated to objective cognitive performance. Men who were clinically distressed reported substantially greater subjective cognitive difficulties and decreased overall QoL. Objective measures of fatigue (reaction time and lapses) were associated with poorer cognitive performance.

• The majority of men in this sample experienced mild cognitive deficits across domains and should be reevaluated for further decline in two years. Cognitive remediation should be offered to men with clinically relevant mild cognitive impairment (MCI). Cognitive complaints among PC patients may indicate the presence of psychological distress, and patients reporting cognitive difficulties should be evaluated for psychiatric comorbidity and treated accordingly. Treatment of psychological distress may reduce cognitive symptoms and improve overall QoL.

**Conclusions**
Progress on the training grant and the associated research project continues. Although, as seen above, we are finding cognitive deficits among men treated with ADT, these results are still preliminary and are primarily descriptive. Until we have a larger sample and adequate numbers of control patients, no inferences about the relationship of ADT to these deficits can be made.

**References** None

**Appendices** None