Frequency, Severity and Distress of Dialysis-related Symptoms Reported by Patients on Hemodialysis

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**Purpose:** To determine which symptoms are the most reported, occur most frequently, have the greatest severity, and the most bothersome for hemodialysis (HD) patients and to determine if the symptoms experienced differ between the first (HD 1) and second (HD 2) treatments of the week.

**Design:** A descriptive, comparative design was used to determine participants’ HD symptoms experience on HD 1 and HD 2, and the effect of the symptom experience on Quality of Life (QOL). A sample of 100 subjects was recruited from five dialysis centers.

**Methods:** The adapted Dialysis Frequency, Severity and Symptom Burden Index (DFSSBI) and the Medical Outcomes Study Short Form 36 (MOS SF 36) were administered (N = 99) on HD 1 and the DFSSBI again on HD 2. Data were analyzed for significance among symptoms experience test scores in relation to HD 1 and HD 2, QOL, and gender and age.

**Results:** Of 31 symptoms assessed, respondents reported an average of 9.69 symptoms on HD 1 and 7.51 symptoms on HD 2. Overall, symptoms were more reported, more frequent, more severe and more bothersome on HD 1. Females scored consistently higher than males in the four symptom dimensions. Of the 31 symptoms, twelve were reported the most by subjects in all four symptom dimensions. The respondents reported about the same as the population norm (50) on the physical component summary score of the MOS SF 36 and higher than the norm (65.23) on the mental component summary score.

**Conclusion:** The study findings highlighted the fact that HD patients experience multiple symptoms that can be frequent, severe, and bothersome. Interventions should be developed and tested to reduce symptom burden and improve QOL.

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