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EXPERIENCES OF CANCER PATIENTS RECEIVING CHEMOTHERAPY IN ONCOLOGY FACILITIES: A SCOPING REVIEW PROTOCOL

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Abstract

****Objective****

This scoping review aims to map and synthesise existing evidence on the experiences of cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy in oncology facilities.

****Introduction****

Chemotherapy is a cornerstone of cancer treatment but is often accompanied by significant physical, psychological, and social challenges. These challenges can affect patients' quality of life, adherence to treatment, and overall satisfaction with care. Gaining a deeper understanding of how patients experience chemotherapy within oncology facilities is essential for strengthening patient-centred nursing practice and improving supportive care interventions.

Cancer remains a major global health challenge, with rising incidence rates and improved survival due to advances in early diagnosis and treatment. Chemotherapy continues to play a significant role in cancer management, whether used for curative, adjuvant, or palliative purposes. Despite its effectiveness, chemotherapy is frequently associated with adverse physical effects such as nausea, vomiting, fatigue, pain, hair loss, and immunosuppression. These side effects can significantly disrupt patients' daily lives and overall well-being. Cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy experience a range of physical, emotional, and psychological challenges (Rashidi et al., 2024).

Rising cancer incidence and mortality in the region are linked to demographic changes such as population growth and ageing, as well as persistent challenges including late diagnosis and limited healthcare infrastructure (Sung et al., 2021). Within SSA, chemotherapy is commonly administered by health care professionals in resource-constrained oncology facilities, where shortages of specialised personnel, equipment, and supportive services may significantly influence patients' treatment experiences (Gopal et al., 2018).

The administration of chemotherapy is frequently accompanied by a wide range of adverse physical effects. These include nausea, vomiting, fatigue, pain, alopecia, myelosuppression, and treatment-related cognitive changes often described as "chemo brain" (Schagen et al., 2022). In addition to these physical symptoms, patients undergoing chemotherapy often experience substantial psychological and emotional challenges. Anxiety, depression, fear of disease progression, and uncertainty surrounding treatment outcomes are commonly reported by cancer patients and may worsen over the course of therapy (Kingsley et al., 2024). The intersecting physical, psychological, and social challenges can profoundly affect patients' quality of life, adherence to treatment, and ongoing engagement with oncology services.

While a growing number of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies have explored aspects of cancer patients' experiences of chemotherapy, the available evidence remains widely dispersed across different cancer types, care settings, and geographical regions. In SSA research on cancer patient experiences is fragmented and heterogeneous, making it difficult to develop a coherent understanding of common themes or to clearly identify priority areas for improvement. To date, there is no scoping review that has systematically mapped the extent,

nature, and characteristics of evidence relating to the experiences of cancer patients receiving chemotherapy in oncology facilities in SSA.

Beyond physical symptoms, patients undergoing chemotherapy often face considerable psychological distress (Kingsley, Olukayode, Olose & Akaba, 2024). Feelings of anxiety, depression, fear of disease progression, and uncertainty about treatment outcomes are commonly reported. Social challenges including altered family roles, reduced ability to work, financial strain, and social isolation can further intensify the burden of treatment. Additionally, the oncology care environment, communication with healthcare professionals, and access to supportive services play a crucial role in shaping patients' overall experiences. Several common cancers are becoming increasingly chronic, and a large body of research indicates that cancer therapies are associated with cognitive impairment, commonly known as "chemo brain," impacts a significant number of patients, leading to challenges with memory, attention, and executive functions (Országhová, Mego & Chovanec, 2021).

Although a growing body of research has examined patients' experiences of chemotherapy using qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approaches, this evidence remains scattered across different cancer types, healthcare settings, and geographical contexts. As a result, it is difficult to obtain a comprehensive overview of what is currently known about patients' experiences.

A preliminary search will be done on MEDLINE, the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, and a JBI Evidence Synthesis revealed no existing or ongoing scoping reviews that comprehensively map the experiences of adult cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy in oncology facilities. This scoping review sets out to bring together and make sense of what is currently known about the experiences of cancer patients receiving chemotherapy in oncology settings across sub-Saharan Africa. By drawing on existing studies, it will seek to highlight what has been explored, identify areas that remain under-researched, and offer direction for future work in this field.

This scoping review aims to comprehensively map and synthesize the current literature on the experiences of cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy in oncology facilities across sub-Saharan Africa, addressing existing gaps and providing insights for future research.

Attachments



SCOPING REVIEW

PROTO...

37KB

Materials

This protocol will include articles on experiences of cancer patients diagnosed with any type of cancer who are receiving or have received chemotherapy. This scoping review will be carried out following the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) guidelines for conducting scoping reviews. The protocol has been registered with the Open Science Framework (<https://osf.io/7zta4/>).

Before start

this is a scoping review protocol for Experiences of cancer patients receiving chemotherapy in oncology facility.

Inclusion Criteria

- 1 The review will include studies involving cancer patients (18 years and older) who are currently receiving or have previously received chemotherapy. The focus will be on patients' experiences, including physical, emotional, psychological, social, and healthcare-related aspects. The review will consider studies conducted in oncology facilities such as hospitals, cancer centres, and outpatient oncology units. Studies focusing exclusively on paediatric populations or non-chemotherapy cancer treatments will be excluded.

Methodology

- 2 This scoping review will follow the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) methodology for scoping reviews. A three-step search strategy will be used to identify published and unpublished literature from MEDLINE (PubMed), CINAHL (EBSCO), Scopus, and Web of Science. Study selection and data extraction will be conducted independently by two reviewers. The findings will be presented in both tabular and narrative formats to describe the scope, nature, and gaps in the available evidence.

Objective

- 3 The objective of this scoping review is to map the existing literature on the experiences of adult cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy in oncology facilities.

Review Question

- 4 What evidence exists regarding the experiences of adult cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy in oncology facilities?

Inclusion Criteria

- 5 This protocol will include articles with adult patients (18 years and older) diagnosed with any type of cancer who are receiving or have received chemotherapy. Studies focusing exclusively on paediatric patients will be excluded.
The review will focus on patients' experiences of chemotherapy, including physical symptoms, emotional, psychological issues, social impacts, and experiences of care within oncology services. Studies reporting only clinical outcomes without reference to patient experiences will be excluded.
The review will consider studies conducted in oncology facilities, including hospitals, cancer centres, outpatient oncology clinics, and specialised chemotherapy units. No

geographical restrictions will be applied for this review.

Types of Sources

- 6 This review will include experimental articles, observational studies, and qualitative research designs such as phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and qualitative descriptive studies. Relevant systematic reviews, as well as full text articles that meet the inclusion criteria will also be considered.

Search Strategy

- 7 A three-step search strategy will be used to identify both published and unpublished studies. An initial limited search of MEDLINE (PubMed), CINAHL (EBSCO) and Google Scholar will be undertaken to identify relevant articles for this scoping review. Key words and index terms from these articles will inform the development of a comprehensive search strategy, which will be adapted for each database. Reference lists of included studies will also be screened to identify additional sources. Studies published in English language from the year 2016 to 2026 will be included to reflect experiences of cancer patients who undergone chemotherapy. Databases to be searched include MEDLINE (PubMed), CINAHL (EBSCO), Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar.

Study Selection

- 8 All identified citations will be imported into EndNote for reference management and removal of duplicates. Two reviewers will independently screen titles and abstracts against the inclusion criteria. Full-text articles will be assessed for eligibility using JBI Framework, with reasons for exclusion documented. Any disagreements will be resolved through discussions.

Data Extraction

- 9 Data will be extracted independently by two reviewers using a data extraction tool developed for this review. Extracted information will include study characteristics, participant details, context, methodology, and key findings related to patient experiences. The tool will be piloted and refined as needed.

Data Analysis and Presentation

- 10 Findings will be presented in tabular and diagrammatic formats, accompanied by a narrative summary. The results will be mapped to illustrate the range and nature of available evidence and to identify gaps in the literature.



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- 11 The author sincerely expresses my gratitude to Walter Sisulu University (WSU) Nursing department for offering this opportunity to do this scoping review protocol, as it is conducted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Nursing Science degree at Walter Sisulu University.

Funding

- 12 No funding was received for this scoping review.

Declarations

- 13 The author recognises the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion in health research. the author declares no conflict of interest for this

Author Contributions

- 14 Mthinjiwa Mzamelani conceptualised the study, developed the protocol, and will conduct the scoping review.

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Conflicts of Interest

16 The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Protocol references

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