

FIGHTING FATIGUE

AFTER CANCER TREATMENT



OUTLINE

- 1) INTRODUCTION (DEFINITION, PREVALENCE, PERPETUATING FACTORS)**
- 2) FATIGUE VS DEPRESSION**
- 3) QUANTIFYING FATIGUE**
- 4) INTEGRATIVE APPROACH**
- 5) DR. HO'S TOP FIVE FOR FIGHTING FATIGUE**



WHAT IS CANCER RELATED FATIGUE?

Cancer related fatigue is defined as a distressing, persistent, subjective sense of physical, emotional, and/or cognitive tiredness or exhaustion related to cancer or cancer treatment that is not proportional to recent activity and interferes with usual functioning.

The three components to cancer related fatigue are **physical fatigue, mental fatigue, and emotional fatigue.**

HOW COMMON IS CANCER FATIGUE?

Cancer related fatigue might occur before, during, and after cancer diagnosis and treatment.

50-90% who receive chemotherapy and radiation experience fatigue

29% experience fatigue after complete remission from breast, prostate, colorectal, or lung cancer, often months to years.

When should my fatigue subside?

The severity and length of fatigue can be highly individualized depending on type of cancer, treatment, treatment length, and comorbidities.





PERPETUATING FACTORS:

Physical: chronic pain, anemia, hypogonadism, hypothyroidism, malabsorption, infection, diabetes

Mental: early dementia, memory loss, decreased mental speed, alcohol abuse, insomnia, multiple antipsychotic medications

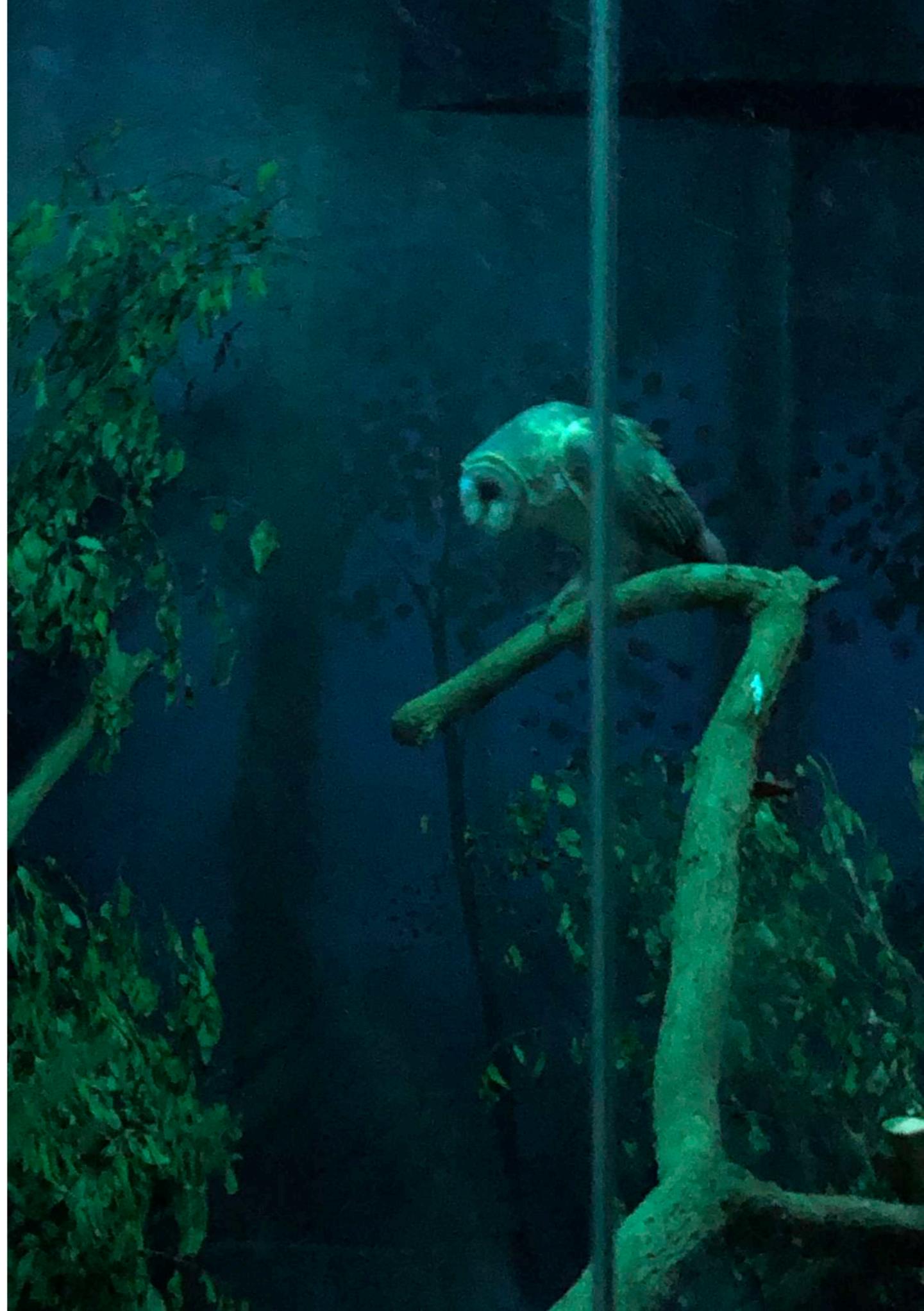
Emotion: anxiety, depression

Medications, supplements, and other substances use such as alcohol and cannabis may influence energy levels.

DEPRESSION VS FATIGUE

Fatigue and depression share a lot of the same symptoms and presentation.

- 1) It's more common for patients to experience fatigue than depression
- 2) Sense of hopelessness, guilt, loss of pleasure, lack of motivation, suicidal ideation are unique to depression.
- 3) Family history of depression



MEASURE FATIGUE

Physical:

- 1) Patient reported questionnaire (activities of daily living)
- 2) Skeletal muscle strength & *stability*
- 3) Endurance
- 4) Pain
- 5) Blood work: CBC

Mental:

- 1) Question sleep quality and presence of sleep apnea
- 2) Cognitive function (mental status exam)

Emotional:

- 1) PHQ9 screening for depression

WHAT TO DO?

Let's start with physical fatigue.

- 1) Exercise:
 - 1) 150 minutes of aerobic and resistance exercises
 - 2) Aim for moderate intensity exercise* (40-60% of maximum heart rate)
- 2) Nutrition:
 - 1) Anti- inflammation and anti- oxidant rich diet
 - 2) Eat every two hours to maintain steady blood sugar. This will regulate mood and energy.
- 3) Hydration: clean water + electrolytes
- 4) Acupuncture
- 5) Regular check up with your integrative cancer care team. (Check thyroid hormone, examine any drug interactions, etc.)

*Kampshoff et al, BMC Cancer 2010



WHAT TO DO?

Onto mental fatigue. See *Guide to Manager Chemo Brain*.

1) Natural medicines:

- 1) Ginseng*
- 2) Green tea
- 3) L- carnitine*

2) Medications:

- 1) Stimulants such as methylphenidate
- 2) Memory enhancing drugs such donepezil

3) Address sleep and treat sleep apnea

4) Meditation

5) Cognitive behavioral therapy

6) Build a new hobby!

WHAT TO DO?

Lastly, emotional fatigue.

- 1) Identify meaning in life:
 - 1) Maintain important activities
 - 2) Facilitate adjustment to limitations imposed by fatigue
 - 3) Restructure goals and expectations
- 2) Nutrients:
 - 1) Vitamin B6, vitamin B12, folate
 - 2) Adequate protein and iron to support dopamine and serotonin productions respectively
- 3) Medications: antidepressants and anxiolytics
- 4) Counseling and biofeedback





DR. HO'S TOP FIVE FOR FIGHTING FATIGUE

- 1) 20 minutes of moderately intense aerobic exercise every morning
- 2) Surround yourself with your support system
- 3) 1 cup match green tea with breakfast
- 4) Get out in the sun daily!
- 5) Take naps

Questions?

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