

CN60 The experience of dysgeusia in allogeneic hematopoietic cell transplantation survivors: A qualitative study

D. Bomben¹, A. Bin², M. Venturini¹, T. Bulfone¹, L. Ghirotto³, V. Bressan¹

¹Department of Medical Sciences, University of Udine, Udine, Italy, ²Oncology Department, Udine University Hospital, Udine, Italy, ³Research, Azienda Santa Maria Nuova-IRCCS, Reggio Emilia, Italy

Background: Taste disorders are one of the most common side effects of treatment in oncology patients and often occur after allogeneic hematopoietic cell transplantation (allo-HCT). Dysgeusia is rarely a life-threatening complication, therefore, in many cases it does not receive close medical attention. Furthermore, information about this disorder is largely based on the clinician's own experience. However, taste disorders, can impact on the quality of life in survivors of allo-HCT, and compromise their enjoyment of eating, food intake, weight and nutritional status. The number of performed annual transplantations continues to grow annually and the number of older long-term survivors increases. There is little literature that is focused on studies of survivors of allo-HCT with taste disorders. We conducted a qualitative descriptive study to explore experiences of dysgeusia in patients that have undergone of allo-HCT and examined what strategies they used to mitigate it.

Methods: Using purposive sampling, survivors of allo-HCT were recruited. Audiotape interviews were conducted until data saturation was achieved. Each interview was transcribed verbatim, and content analyses were performed to extract significant themes and subthemes.

Results: Three major themes embracing various aspects of allo-HCT survivors' experiences were identified: 1) the shape of taste; 2) everything is irritating and it is arduous to eat; 3) finding new strategies to overcome the problems. Together, they highlight the experiences of survivors showing how taste disorders can affect the physical, psychological and social dimensions of a person for the rest of their life.

Conclusions: A cumulative burden is the result of dysgeusia and its clinical course reinforced also by related symptoms. Healthcare professionals must focus their attention on the management of these symptoms and offer interventions to safeguard the patient's social, physical and psychological well-being. Finally, further research is needed to explore the experiences of allo-HCT patients who have taste disorders throughout their cancer journey that introduces a more holistic approach which involves health professionals, caregivers and family members.

Legal entity responsible for the study: Valentina Bressan.

Funding: Has not received any funding.

Disclosure: All authors have declared no conflicts of interest.