



Focus on Lymphoma app educates patients and facilitates treatment and symptom management

By: Alberto Montero, MD / October 29, 2014

App Review of Focus on Lymphoma by Lymphoma Research Foundation

Lymphomas comprise a very heterogeneous collection of neoplasms of lymphocytes, which classically have been separated into two major groups: Hodgkin and non-Hodgkin lymphoma (NHL). According to the American Cancer Society 2014 Cancer Facts and Figures, the annual incidence in the U.S. of lymphoma is approximately 80,000 cases.

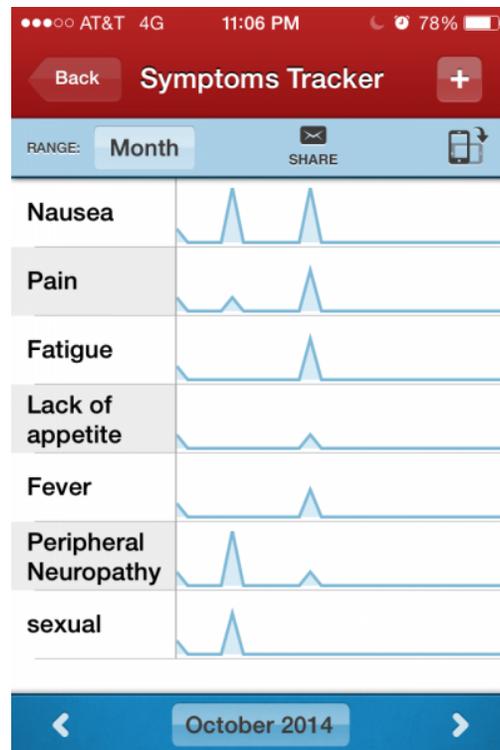
NHL is about 7 times more common than Hodgkin lymphoma, with the latter being the 6th and 7th most common cancers in women and men, respectively. The World Health Organization 2008 lymphoma classification system recognizes at least 20 different distinct clinical entities distinguished both by flow cytometry, lymph node morphology, and by the presence of specific genetic aberrations.

The underlying complexities of the diagnosis and nuances of the treatment and management of many different types of lymphoma, make proper patient education extremely important. The Focus on Lymphoma app by the Lymphoma Research Foundation directly addresses these complexities for patients by providing a very good educational resource on lymphoma in the learn section:



The Focus on Lymphoma mobile app also provides a platform in the track section that facilitates treatment adherence and symptom management, among other things. The track tab has four different sections worth mentioning. The medicine manager section enables patients to help track medications in a manner that is rather functional and intuitive.

The symptoms tracker is sleek with a very easy way for patients to input symptoms and a graphical representation of symptoms over time that looks like this:



Evidence Behind the App

The information in the learn section is very well organized, thorough, and up to date, comprehensively covering the entire spectrum of lymphoma from diagnosis, terminology, and treatment, to survivorship. The app in the connect heading provides links to connect with trained staff from the lymphoma research foundation to provide any additional support. For emotional support, stories of lymphoma survivors are available or information on how to apply to be part of the lymphoma support network.

Although this mobile application is very well designed, it begs the question whether its use in lymphoma patients improves some clinical outcome such as adherence or improved management of chemotherapy related toxicities.

In the field of oncology, published studies involving mobile applications designed with the intent to facilitate patient self-management have thus far only looked at overall feasibility, and patient acceptance. It will be important to determine with greater certainty if mobile technology applications can be leveraged

to improved health outcomes in cancer and chronic illnesses, or at the very least improve the patient experience.

A recent Cochrane review of mobile applications for self-management of asthma, concluded that data was insufficient to recommend their use. By contrast, a more recent Cochrane review found that the use of mobile phone messaging in asthma and diabetes patients did provide modest clinical benefits.