Methylphenidate for the amelioration of cancer-associated fatigue

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To the editor:

I read with great interest the recent article by Romito et al. in a recent issue of your esteemed journal [1]. The article is highly thought provoking. Interestingly, recent studies have shown the significant effectiveness of psycho-stimulants such as methylphenidate in attenuating cancer-associated fatigue.

For instance, both the “Brief Fatigue Inventory severity scores” and the “Brief Fatigue Inventory total scores” are decreased in prostate cancer patients following methylphenidate therapy [2]. Similarly, Cueva et al. in a recent study have shown the effectiveness of methylphenidate in attenuating asthenia in breast carcinoma patients who received chemotherapy with agents such as docetaxel [3].

Significant improvement in the quality of life index as well as a corresponding attenuation of fatigue is seen in patients with recurrent gynecological carcinomas following methylphenidate therapy [4]. Interestingly, marked improvement in fatigue has been seen after “patient-controlled” methylphenidate administration [5]. Treatment response at the initiation of therapy is a good predictor of ultimate and long-term response to methylphenidate therapy [6].

However, the blood pressure needs to be monitored closely in cancer patients on methylphenidate therapy. The above studies clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of methylphenidate in ameliorating cancer-associated fatigue. Hopefully, the

coming few years will see an increased use of methylphenidate for the management of fatigue in patients with advanced and end-stage cancers.

Conflict of interest None.

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