



## Cancer channel

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### Clearing the air on 'Chemofog'

(Ivanhoe Newswire) -- Between 20 percent and 30 percent of chemotherapy patients report temporary memory problems, termed "chemofog" or "chemobrain." But new evidence suggests stress and quality of life issues may be more responsible for memory and concentration problems in breast cancer patients than chemotherapy or radiation.

The conclusion is based on two studies in which breast cancer patients were tested on cognitive and emotional issues.

The first study tested for attention, learning skills, memory, concentration and other cognitive skills in women before and after chemotherapy and compared them to healthy women.

The second study included women before therapy, some of whom had been recently biopsied and did not have cancer, and breast cancer survivors. They were also evaluated for anxiety, depression, overall quality of life and the amount of social support they had.

The results of both studies showed chemotherapy or radiation alone had minimal effect on memory, attention or other cognitive functions. It also showed recently diagnosed women who had good quality of life scored better in cognitive tests.

"The results suggest that cognitive difficulties experienced by with a new breast cancer diagnosis may be related to stress as a result of diagnosis and other quality of life factors and not simple due to the effects of chemotherapy or radiation," study author Michael J. Boivin, Ph.D, M.P.H., of Michigan State University, was quoted as saying.

David G. Darby, M.D., is also a study author and chief medical officer of CogState Ltd., the Australian company that developed the cognitive tests used in the studies. He said, "People could be making decisions about chemotherapy based on stories they heard about 'chemofog' or 'chemobrain.' Hopefully this information will help people make informed decisions."

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SOURCE: Presented at the American Academy of Neurology's 60th Annual Meeting in Chicago, April 12-19, 2008

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