

Cooling – A Strategy in MS Care

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Symptoms such as fatigue, dizziness, lack of balance and concentration are worsened by heat for about 60-80% of heat sensitive persons having Multiple Sclerosis (MS). These symptoms strongly influence performance of daily activities. A cooling-suit, used by MS patients in the USA since the early 1990s, was introduced in Sweden in 1994. Studies report temporary physical improvement. No study focuses on the MS patients' experiences in daily life and self-care ability. Which is of great interest for nurses, when assessing, planning, implementing, and evaluating nursing care.

The aim of this study was to collect information on MS patients' experiences from using a cooling-suit and also the impact on fatigue and self-care ability. Ten MS patients, seven woman and three men, used a cooling-suit in their own homes for 4 to 25 weeks.

A quasiexperimental before-and-after study was designed. A single case approach was taken and quantitative and qualitative methods were used: 1) two questionnaires 0 ADL Self-Care Scale for persons with Multiple Sclerosis and Fatigue Impact Scale (FIS) before and after, 2) tape-recorded interviews before and after, and 3) a semistructured diary written by each participant for one week.

The studied samples varied in the course of the disease from relapsing-remitting (n=3), relapsing-progressive (n=2) to chronic-progressive (n=5). Before the intervention, five persons managed their self-care on their own, two had limitations in their self-care ability, and three had severe limitations in self-care. **After the intervention, all participants reported increased self-care ability in varying degrees. Eight reported problems of fatigue before the intervention. All of these experienced decreased fatigue. They reported that this strongly influenced their social lives.**

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