

Research examines over-the-counter drug's effect on chemo's side effects

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New research has potential to alleviate the side effects of cancer treatments.

Beth Faiman MSN, CNP, a doctoral candidate at the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing at Case Western Reserve University, is studying whether an over-the-counter medication could ease chemotherapy [side effects](#) for people with blood and bone marrow cancers.

Faiman has worked as a nurse practitioner since 1994 at the Cleveland Clinic Taussig Cancer Center with patients diagnosed with multiple myeloma. Working with doctors who treat patients and also do research inspired Faiman, she says. "I wanted to be a nurse researcher, and like the doctors, treat patients but also do research to help them."

Faiman needed her PhD to do it. She enrolled in the doctoral program at the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing.

As a [nurse practitioner](#) and a delegate for the International Myeloma Foundation Nurse Leadership Board, Faiman observed that her patients, with multiple myeloma are surviving cancer with new drug treatments. Unfortunately the treatments caused peripheral neuropathy – the nerve damage that leaves some patients with severe numbing, burning or tingling in the hands and feet.

With support from two grants—one from the Oncology Nursing Society

and the other from the National Institutes of Health's National Research Service Award program, she will lead the study, "The effect of adjuvant therapy on cancer neuropathy symptoms."

Faiman will enroll 60 patients with multiple myeloma in a double-blind study in which half of the group will receive Glutamine, which has helped some colon and breast cancer patients with their neuropathy. The other half will receive a placebo.

Glutamine can be bought over the counter at drug stores. It is an agent that some patients say alleviates painful symptoms. In cancers like breast and colon, some patients have seen an improvement in these symptoms.

Faiman's concern is that patients may be taking a medication that would interfere with their chemotherapy or that would yield no benefits.

"These individuals with peripheral neuropathy are at risk for falls and other dangers," Faiman says.

Few researchers have yet studied Glutamine's effectiveness, Faiman says, especially, with patients diagnosed with [multiple myeloma](#). She hopes her pioneering effort may give patients additional information as the work to beat [cancer](#) – and she hopes it will bring her one step closer to the nurse-researcher she aims to be.

Provided by Case Western Reserve University

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