

# Perspectives on fatigue management in metastatic breast cancer : a national French survey assessing oncologists' and patients' views

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## Objectives

- This mirror survey aims to answer medical gaps on fatigue management and support the medical community and patients with the management of fatigue induced by anticancer drugs. The purpose is to highlight the differences between the perceptions of healthcare professionals (HCP) and patients (pts).
- The questionnaire aim is to better understand cancer-related fatigue (CRF) and its management among metastatic breast cancer (mBC) pts in France.

## Conclusions

- This study confirms the complexity and multidimensional aspect of fatigue. Insufficient time and lack of communication during consultations contribute to ineffective diagnosis and management of fatigue in France, highlighting the need for improvement through better communication and the provision of tools and guidelines. It is encouraging to note that nearly 2/3rds of oncologists are willing to be trained to optimize the care of their patients' fatigue.

## Plain language summary



### Why did we perform this research?

To identify medical gaps on fatigue management that affect the quality of life of pts with metastatic breast cancer treated by anticancer drugs.

To compare oncologists' and patients' perceptions on fatigue management in order to improve patient support and to assess the current situation and precise needs of both patients and oncologists.



### How did we perform this research?

Implementation of a large-scale national online mirror survey for patients and physicians on the topic of fatigue through self-administered online questionnaire, recruitment via patient associations and fieldwork.

The survey involves 132 patients undergoing treatment for metastatic breast cancer along with 43 specialized oncologists caring for patients with metastatic breast cancer.



### What were the findings of this research?

A dissatisfaction from patients with cancer related fatigue, revealing a significant communication gap between healthcare professionals and patients regarding the importance of addressing fatigue during cancer treatment. Additionally, there is a notable lack of effective tools for managing this fatigue.



### What are the implications of this research?

Identifying ways to enhance fatigue management, such as implementing healthcare professionals' trainings, incorporating fatigue assessment in extra consultation time, developing official measurement tools for doctors to standardize practices according to clear guidelines, and increasing nurse involvement in patient follow-up.

## Background and Introduction

- French physicians emphasize fatigue as a challenging adverse event in the treatment (ttt) of their patients with metastatic breast cancer. This concern is also present at both European and global levels.
- HCPs may struggle to deal with cancer related fatigue or feel helpless since there are no specific guidelines.
- Fatigue is a frequent and complex adverse event often associated with metastatic breast cancer and its treatment. We aimed to collect data on the experiences and management of fatigue among metastatic breast cancer patients and oncologists in France.

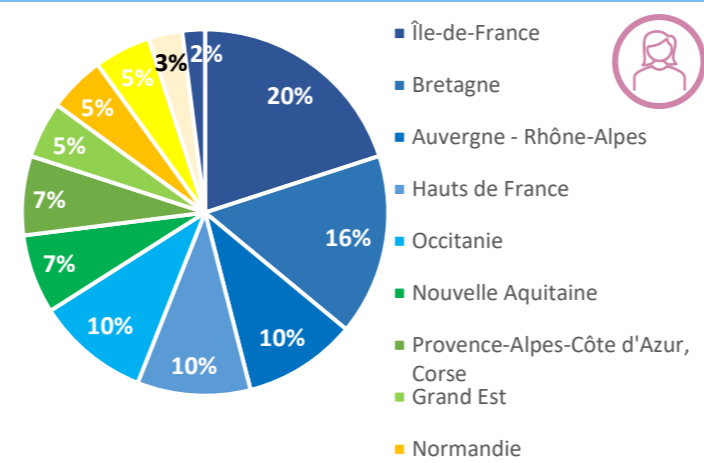
## Results and interpretation

### Patients' characteristics

Table 1 : Age distribution of pts

Average age	50 ans
25-34 years	5%
35-44 years	27%
45-54 years	36%
55-64 years	23%
65-74 years	8%
≥75 years	2%

Graph 1 : Geographical distribution of pts



At the data cut-off, 132 pts responded to the questionnaire.

- 86% of surveyed pts said they were physically active before diagnosis. Of these, 61% declared being active at least once a week.
- 55% claim to have maintained the same activity as before diagnosis

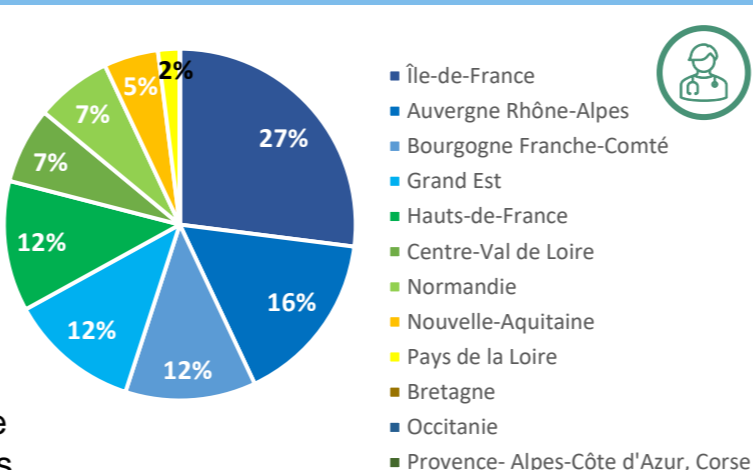
### Physicians' characteristics

At the data cut-off, 43 oncologists responded.

Table 2 : Age distribution of HCPs

Average age	50 ans
< 45 years	47%
45-54 years	23%
≥ 55 years	30%

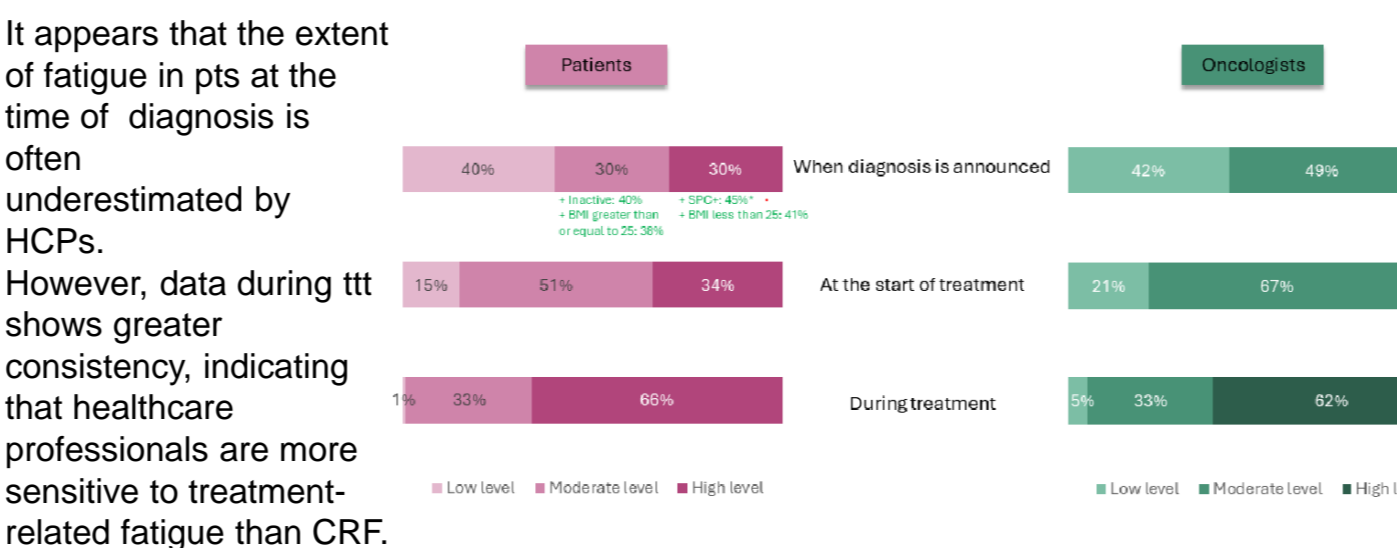
Graph 2 : Geographical distribution of healthcare professionals



- 93% of them have a hospital-based practice, while 7% have mixed (private facilities and public hospitals) practices

Graph 3 : An increasing intensity of fatigue experienced by pts as the ttt advances.

The presence of a dual fatigue (physical and psychological fatigue) prior to the initiation of ttt.



Graph 4 : Reasons of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with fatigue management

73% of patients declare themselves dissatisfied with the management of their fatigue linked to their metastatic breast cancer (96 patients)



### Overall satisfaction with fatigue management.

- 27% of patients declare themselves satisfied with the management of their fatigue while 73% of patients declare themselves dissatisfied

- While all doctors declared using dose modification to alleviate fatigue, only 33% of pts included are aware that their dose is modified to adjust fatigue

## Methods

We conducted a quantitative and qualitative survey from July to September 2023 through online standardized questionnaires containing identical questions for both oncologists and pts in France. Specifically, it involves querying patients with mBC about their experience, their management of fatigue, and assessing their expectations. Simultaneously, we interviewed oncologists specialized in the management of pts with mBC, to understand their perspectives on this issue, their practices regarding fatigue management and the difficulties encountered.

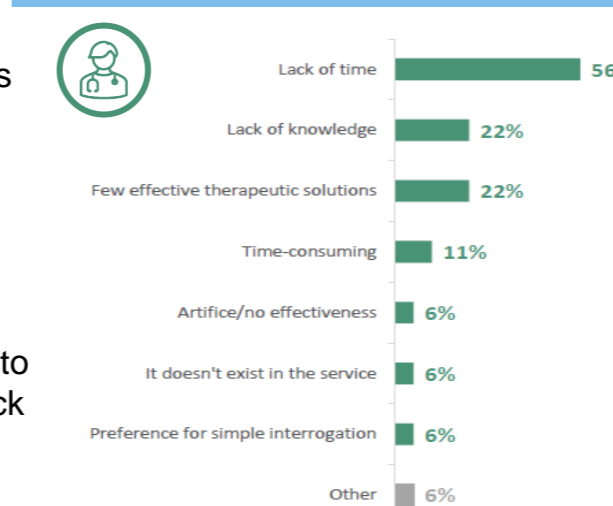
The questionnaire was relayed by patient advocacy groups, medical science liaison and the cooperative group AFSOS (Association Francophone Des Soins Oncologiques De Support).



### Non-use of tools mainly justified by lack of time during consultations.

- Physicians encounter challenges in addressing patient's fatigue.
- The foremost challenge, accounting for 56% of cases, is the lack of sufficient time during consultations.
- Several other factors contribute to these challenges, including a lack of knowledge and ineffective therapeutic solutions, each present in 22% of cases.

Graph 5 : Reasons for not using fatigue measurement tools



Graph 6 : Oncologists' recommendations to help pts relieve fatigue

55% of pts received at least one recommendation for fatigue management whereas 45% received none.

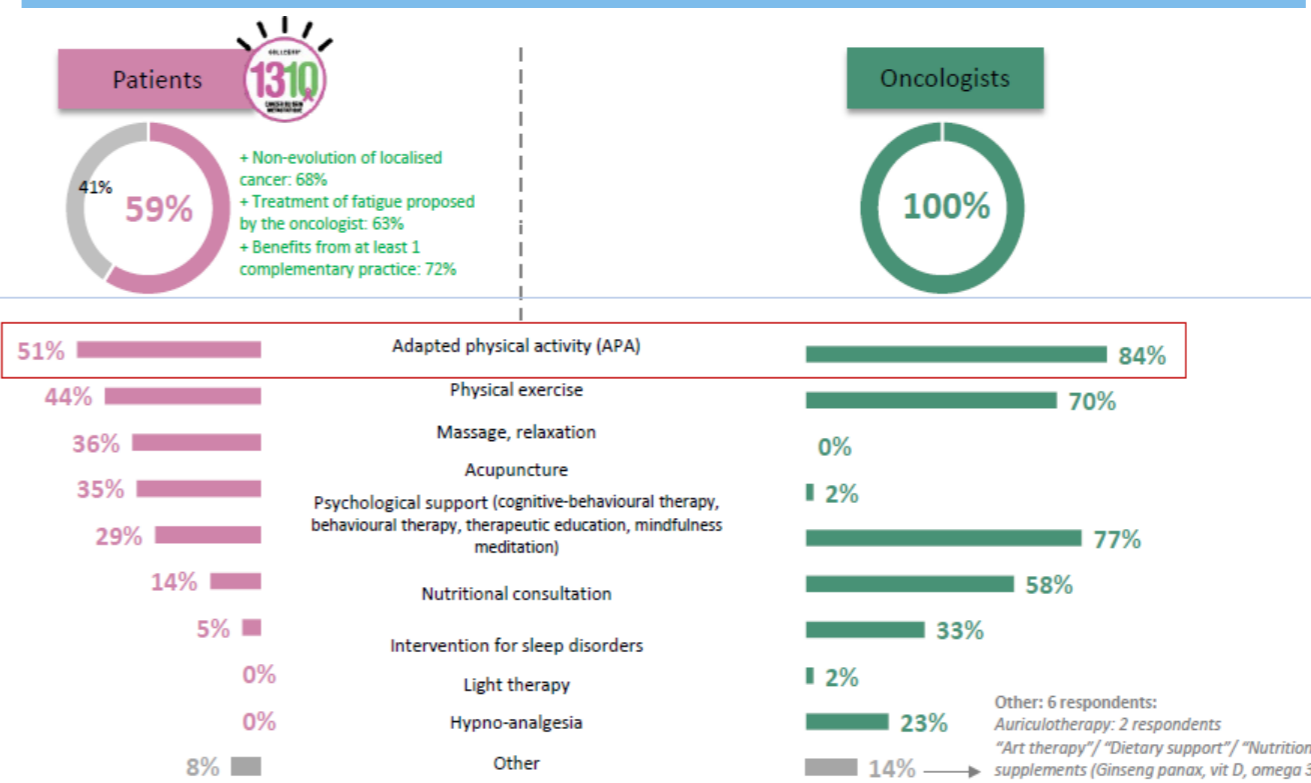


Among those who received a recommendation, the practice of physical activity was advised in 90% of cases.

A strong gap between the experience of patients and the practice of oncologists in terms of fatigue management.

- While 100% of oncologists stated offering non-pharmacological supportive care, only 59% of patients declared benefited or benefiting from a non-drug supportive care.
- Among these physicians, 84% of them proposed adapted physical activity (APA) as a supportive care, but only 51% of patients reported receiving APA

Graph 7 : Proposal for supportive care by the oncologist



### Acknowledgments

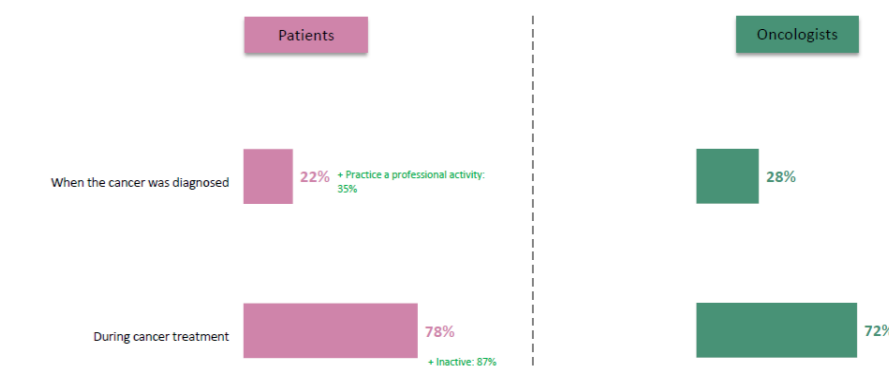
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Graph 8 : APA, a practice proposed mainly during treatment rather than at diagnosis

### Focus on Adapted Physical Activity (APA)

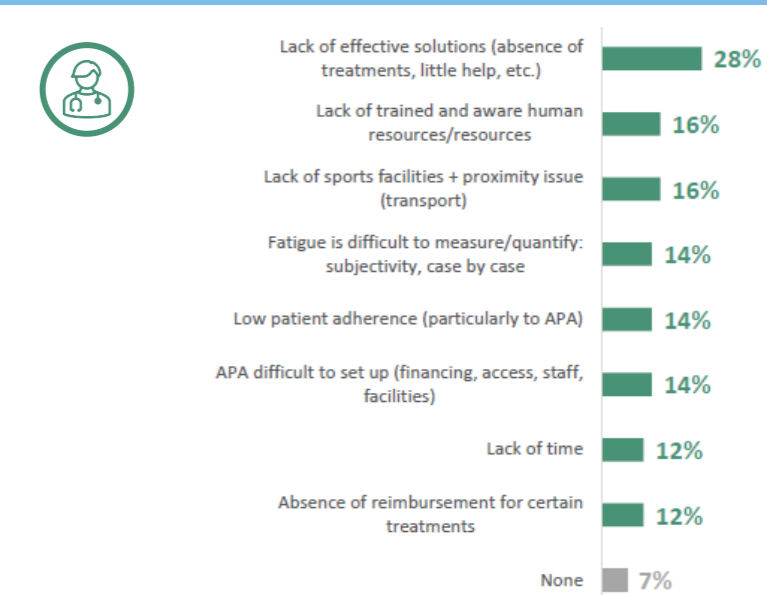
- As the main non-pharmacological supportive care, APA may not always be offered at the cancer diagnosis. In fact, 78% of patients report having received recommendations on APA only during cancer treatment while only 22% of them stated having received it when cancer was diagnosed.



### Challenges faced by healthcare professionals in managing fatigue

The difficulties encountered by healthcare professionals in the management of fatigue in patients with metastatic breast cancer is mainly linked to the lack of human resources and suitable structures.

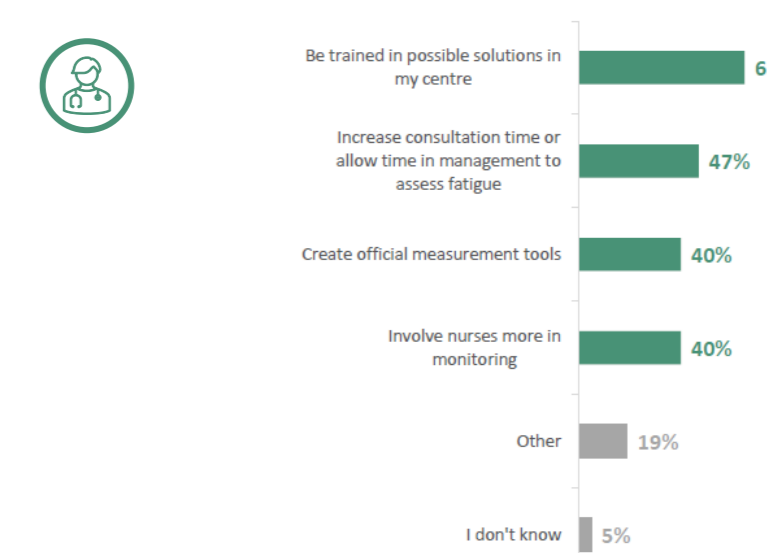
Graph 9 : Difficulties encountered by oncologists in managing fatigue



### Solutions derived from this survey to enhance fatigue management

Nearly 2/3rds of doctors would like to be trained in possible solutions to better manage their patients' fatigue. Four areas for improvement have been identified by healthcare professionals through the survey.

Graph 10: Areas of improvement to enhance fatigue management



Conflict of interest : Lilly, Novartis, Pfizer, MSD, Eisai, Gilead, Novartis, Daiichi-Sankyo, Pfizer

Poster presented at MASCC 2024 congress