

**Susan Goodin**

**Pilot trial of dextromethorphan in cancer related-fatigue**

**[Dextromethorphan, an over-the-counter cough medicine that has been used for over 30 years, may be effective in treating cancer-related fatigue.]**

Although advances have been made into the causes of and cures for cancer, efforts to manage the symptoms of the disease and its treatments have not kept pace. Fatigue is the most prevalent symptom experienced by patients with cancer and in cancer survivors, but is often overlooked and under treated by health professionals. Currently, there is little evidence for effective therapies as the etiology to cancer-related fatigue is currently unknown. There are no validated animal models of fatigue and fatigue has generally been studied as a self-reported phenomenon in humans. Developing effective therapies for the treatment of cancer-related fatigue will improve quality of life and may improve compliance for potentially curative chemotherapy.

In 2002, the American Cancer Society estimates that 41,100 new cases of cancer will be diagnosed among New Jersey residents and 17,800 residents will die from cancer. Seventy-six percent of cancer patients experience fatigue at least a few days each month during their most recent chemotherapy and 30% experience fatigue on a daily basis. Fatigue has been ranked the longest lasting and most disruptive symptom by cancer patients and has the greatest impact on quality of life parameters. Additionally, fatigue from the treatment of cancer is one reason patients cite for poor compliance with cancer therapy. Given the prevalence of cancer in New Jersey and the high rate of fatigue reported by cancer patients, the development of novel treatments for cancer-related fatigue would greatly improve the health, quality of life, and productivity of the citizens of New Jersey.

There are two purposes to this study. The first objective is to evaluate the effects of dextromethorphan in patients suffering from cancer related fatigue. The second objectives is to correlate the changes in cancer-related fatigue caused by the dextromethorphan with the levels of homocysteine and foliate in the blood to determine if they are associated with the development of fatigue in cancer patients.