The National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) recommends all patients be screened for distress. Despite the efficacy of psychosocial interventions, few patients in distress are actually identified and referred for help. The "distress thermometer" and accompanying "problem list" is an NCCN endorsed instrument that has been validated and is widely used. It has been shown to have sensitivity ratings from 0.65 to 0.77 and is acknowledged for its ease in administration, scoring and interpretation.

### AIMS

To investigate the prevalence and contributing psychological factors of distress among cancer patients treated with radiation therapy, and to determine the relationship between these symptoms and treatment site.

### METHODS

- **140 patients treated at Oregon Health Sciences University Knight Cancer Institute radiation oncology and medical oncology clinics were screened for psychological distress using the NCCN “Distress Thermometer” and problem list**
- **Patient and clinical data including age, sex, and disease site were acquired retrospectively for analysis.**
- **Chi-square analysis and Fisher's exact tests were employed to determine statistical significance.**

### RESULTS

- **Mean distress score: 3.5 (range 0-9)**
  - 89 (69%) had low distress, 0-4; 37 (28.7%) had moderate distress, 5-7; 3 (2.3%) had high distress, 8-10
- **Distress score was not associated with gender or age**
- **Emotional (p<.001), physical (p=.001), and practical (p=.002) problems are associated with distress score**
- **Most common problem: fatigue (52%)**

### DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

- **Psychological distress can negatively impact patients as they cope with cancer diagnosis, treatment, and recovery**
- **A significant amount of emotional distress is present among patient undergoing radiation therapy.**
- **Emotional, physical, and practical concerns are shown to be particularly significant sources of distress.**
- **Patients undergoing radiation therapy may suffer from psychological distress despite being categorized as “low distress” on the NCCN distress thermometer.**
- **Radiation therapy patients should be assessed for psychological distress regularly, with particular attention to emotional, physical and practical contributors. However, the NCCN thermometer alone may be insufficient.**