

Study Shows That Half Of Patients With Aggressive Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma Do Not Receive Full Recommended Dose Of Chemotherapy

(NAPSA)—With advances in cancer treatment, survival is now a reality for the thousands of people diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (NHL) and other cancers each year. But a new study published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology* reveals an alarming trend in NHL treatment—approximately half of patients with aggressive and potentially curable NHL fail to receive their full, recommended dose of chemotherapy. Similar results were observed in a study of nearly 20,000 patients with early-stage breast cancer that were revealed last year.

"The data point to a troubling trend in the treatment of patients with aggressive and potentially curable NHL. Far too many patients are not receiving the chemotherapy doses they need in order to have the best chance for remission or cure," said Gary H. Lyman, M.D., M.P.H., of the James P. Wilmot Cancer Center at the University of Rochester Medical Center and lead author of the study.

Previous studies have shown that receiving less than 85 percent of the dose of chemotherapy recommended by national guidelines can result in lower response and survival rates for NHL patients.

According to the study, one of the primary reasons for physicians reducing the dose and delaying the schedule of chemotherapy was neutropenia, a shortage of infection-fighting white blood cells, a common side effect of chemotherapy. Chemotherapy drugs are designed to kill the cancerous cells, but unfortunately,



these drugs also kill healthy cells—including white blood cells. When a patient develops a low white blood cell count, chemotherapy must often be delayed, or the dose reduced, to avoid infection and allow the body's white blood cells to replenish.

However, a low white blood cell count can be prevented through the use of a white blood cell booster. Even though these treatments are available, the study found that only half of patients (54 percent) received a white blood cell booster at some point during the course of chemotherapy and only 12 percent of patients received a white blood cell booster preventatively, to protect patients before white blood cell counts dropped too low.

White blood cell boosters help protect patients from prolonged severe neutropenia and the risk of infection. By taking these white blood cell boosters at the beginning of their chemotherapy regimen, patients can protect themselves from a dangerously low white blood cell count which can help prevent unnecessary delays or reductions in chemotherapy doses.