

PHENOMENOLOGY STUDY: CHANGE IN THE PERCEPTION OF CANCER PATIENTS DUE TO FAMILY SUPPORTS

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ABSTRACT

Background: Cancer is a cell which abnormally grows in human body and can particularly damage other parts of body. During the healing process of cancer, there will be a physical and psychological changing towards the patients. The psychological exchange could happen directly or can also discharge the patient's life quality. Social support can increase the adaptation of patients during the healing period. The smallest social environment that can help the healing process is the family so that family support is needed to refine the patients' perception until they have the spirit to recover. **Objective:** The aim of this study is to analyze changes in the perception of cancer patients start from patients' rejection as far as having spirit to recover. **Methods:** The research design used in this study is a qualitative study with a phenomenological perspective. This study explains an idea about the symptoms that arise about the subject's experience that gives meaning towards an event. **Results:** This research proposes three main themes, which are: (1) Family support towards patients during the healing process (2) Acceptance of cancer patients (3) Passion for recovery of cancer patients. **Conclusions:** The smallest social environment support is needed in changing patients' paradigms from rejection to the emergence of a passion for recovery.

KEYWORDS: Family Support, Changing of Perception, Cancer Patient.

INTRODUCTION

Cancer is a cell which abnormally grows in human body and can particularly damage other parts of body. Based on the existing studies, the growth of cancer will increase every year. The increasing numbers of cancer patients are making a serious problem both from patients and families.^[1] During the healing process of cancer, there will be a physical and psychological changing towards the patients. The psychological exchange could happen directly or can also discharge the patient's life quality.^[2] Life restrictions and other adverse effects can occur on the family due to the disease.^[3]

Quality of life is a broad concept that reflects somebody's experience in all aspects such as social, psychological, physical, and economic in daily life. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), quality of life is a person's perception of his or her personal condition which includes personal health, psychological conditions, freedom of activities, social relations, and the atmosphere of his or her environment.^[4] Social support can improve the adaptation of patients during the healing period.

The smallest social environment that can help the healing process is family.^[5] Social relationships in families that are relatively fixed are usually based on the family line, marriage, or even adaption. The process of socialization and interaction will produce a positive support for patients of cancer sufferer.^[6] Therefore, family support is needed by cancer patients during the healing process. Good family support has been proven in improving the quality of cancer patients' life.^[7] The support of the family is effective in reducing anxiety of the cancer patients during the treatment process.^[8] Therefore, deeper identification is needed regarding changes in the perception of cancer patients due to family support.

METHODS

Study design

The research design used in this study is a qualitative study with a phenomenological perspective. This study explains an idea about the symptoms that arise about the subject's experience that gives meaning towards an event. The experience of events that are complex, continuous, bound to one and another and particularly produce a certain knowledge.^[9]

Research subject

The research subject is a source of information to be explored in a study. This research is a phenomenology study based on community nursing, so it uses a community approach. Participants were selected based on the recommendations of health center cadres. The participants consisted of 6 patients of cancer with age range of 26 to 65 years. From the six participants, three of them have breast cancer, one has endometrial cancer, one has cervical cancer and the last one has lymph cancer. Most of those participants have been diagnosed with cancer for more than five years.

Instrument

The supporting instruments in this study are showed inform of notebooks. Field notes are used to record all non-verbal communication and situations in the research environment. Voice recorder is noted as another supporting instrument.

Data Collection

In-depth interview techniques are used in this study by using semi-structured interview. The strategies used during conducting research such as: (1) The researchers go to *Puskesmas* as the public health centers community (2) The researchers go to health cadres to get recommendations about participants to be involved in the research (3) The researcher and the cadre foster a relationship of mutual trust with the participants (4) The researcher enters into a contract to conduct a semi-structured interview (5) The researcher explains the aim, processes and benefits of the research to the participants (6) The participant signs an informed consent as an approval in following the research (7) The researcher begins to open the interview with open-ended questions, and records all participants' non-verbal responses.

Data analysis

The analysis technique used in this study is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).^[10] The first step taken by the researcher is to reread the entire interview conversation transcript. The use of different fonts and underlines are used to identify information. Furthermore, the researcher identifies themes that might appear in the three types of comments raised in the previous step. The third step is done by connecting every emerging theme, so that showed a themes unity. The researcher repeats the first step to the third in every theme. Then followed by looking for patterns of correlations between cases and themes that had been found.

Trustworthiness

The checking process is done with peers to maintain credibility in the study. The discussion with the expert was also conducted to re-analyze the data obtained in the study.^[10]

RESULTS

From the six participants in the study about family support practices in the healing process of cancer, found as follows:

Theme 1: Family support towards patients of cancer in the healing process

Family's supports during the treatment to the healing process of cancer patients is needed. Family supports that is carried out during the process of treating cancer is describe as follows:

Patient 2: *"Ohh.. They are very supportive and their concerns make them always prepare for anything occur towards their mother.."*

The family also provides encouragement to the patients during the treatment period, as follows:

"Well.. yes, the family always gives encouragement.."

Family's support is also done not only through verbal actions but also non-verbal actions. For example, the family member immediately do some house work and cooperatively take care of it so that the patient will not do any house work during the healing process of cancer.

Patient 4: *"Well, I can't be tired, so my husband take over all of the house works for me.."*

Patient 2: *"I still have chemotherapy and I don't work at all.."*

The practice of family's supports toward the patient is done through the fulfillment of patients' basic needs. The fulfillment of the basic needs are like nutritional needs, activity needs, and hygiene needs that are assisted by the families.

Patient 1: *"Well.. Yes, just like giving me bath, herbal and therapeutic, and also push my wheelchair to keep me company when I need fresh air.."*

The patient's family members also help in treating them during the healing process. Because of the long process of cancer recovery, family assistance is very important. Patients' care is more likely to be done by girls especially their daughter, because women are felt to have better sympathy than men.

Patient 3: *"My daughter always takes care of me and she always helps me with shower everyday.."*

Patient 6: *"This woman is always helping me get prepared because I can't do anything"*

During the long cancer healing process, many functions and roles in the family change. Five of the six participants in this study were mothers. A mother's roles in the family is very big. Many of works and roles of a

mother in the household is replaced by other family members.

Patient 2: *"Most of my roles and housework are taking over by my family"*

On the other hand, the role of a husband as the head of the family is replaced by his wife and other family members. The wife replaces the husband's role as a leader in the family and also helped by parents and other family members.

Patient 1: *"Well yes.. his wife's family works every day, his father sewing at home, grateful for what I have."*

The family's support is done through non-medical treatment. The family also tried alternative treatment besides doctor's treatment. The treatment is done in various places as the family's effort to help the healing process.

Patient 5: *"I had been take somewhere and the cure is sought so that I can recovered"*

Patient 1: *"Yes.. It's like herbal medicine.... it's mostly herbs"*

Theme 2: Acceptance for Cancer Patients

The accepting of the patient's condition as a cancer sufferer is a long process that the patients must go through. After all this time, the patients tries to enjoy all the existing disease processes. The patient is also grateful for having been given this disease. The patients also try to enjoy the entire process of disease they are facing now. The patients are sincere and surrender in facing the illness.

Patient 1: *"I just enjoy it because of the pleasure I got ... and to be given this pain, I'm still grateful ..."*

Patient 2: *"it makes me feel peace.. just enjoy it ..."*

Patients' acceptance are indicated by the increasing of the level of patients' spirituality. With the illness suffered by the patients, the patient remembers that soon they will die and in the end they just surrender to almighty God.

Patient 6: *"I'm not afraid to die, I just remember about that"*

Theme 3: The patient's passion for recovery

After the patient accepts the situation, the patient tries to get up and have the spirit to recover. The patient's passion for recovery consists of several sub-themes such as the patient's desire to be independent, the spirit to recover, the patient consumes healthy food and the patient limits his activities at home. The desire of patients to live independently despite having cancer. Patients do not want to depend on other family members. Patients also have the passion to live independently without the help from others.

Patient 4: *"I'm strong, I don't depend on others and I use to do anything on my own.."*

The emergence of the spirit to recover after going through the process of acceptance and also support from the family. The spirit to heal owned by the client is proven from the client has a passion for treatment. The patient has high motivation and enthusiasm to recover.

Patient 6: *"When we are sick, we have to keep fighting, we can't always depend on others' assistance.."*

The enthusiasm for recovery of patients with cancer is implanted with a healthy lifestyle. Healthy lifestyle is done by consuming healthy food. According to the patients, they should limit the consumption of food that is containing carcinogens. The patient must be very careful in consuming any kind of foods.

Patient 3: *"I have to be careful in consuming food.."*

DISCUSSION

Cancer is a genetic change that appears in the genetic sequence of the cell nucleus that produces the variations in the genome.^[11] There are many complications of cancer such as ranging from pain due to disease processes, brain metastases, and other organs metastases. Sooner or later, the number of complications that is experienced by the patients with cancer can change the lifestyle and even reduce the quality of life of the cancer patients.^[4]

The participant characteristic data shows that 5 out of 6 are women. The data is in accordance with the previous study, this study shows that women have a higher risk of having cancer than men.^[12] This is also in accordance with the data that the prevalence of women suffering from cancer is higher compared to men.^[13]

The age of the participants who have cancer on average above 45 years. These ages are one of the prone to have cancer. The more age, the more people will be exposed to carcinogens that trigger the occurrence of cancer. The increasing age increases a person's risk of having cancer.^[14]

The process of disease and cancer treatment is relatively long, and very painful, so that the support from the smallest social environment such as family is needed. The support inform of good communication can motivate the patients to recover.^[15]

This research shows that there are very much family supports. The various forms of family support such as psychological support. Another form is inform of changing function in the family roles such as all the housework at home done by other family members. The patients in the treatment of cancer have many limitations, so that all the basic needs such as food, activities, personal hygiene are assisted by other family members. Family's support is also inform of the effort to get an

alternative treatment besides the curative treatment at the hospital.

The family's support during the care is very beneficial movement for the treatment process at home until the healing process. Family's support is done by giving care or moral support by encouraging the patients. Good family support can affect a good quality of life for clients in cancer care. Improving the quality of life can affect the healing process^[16].

The family support for patients in cancer care is very important. Cancer treatment that requires a long and painful time, requires assistance from the family. Prolonged care also causes a decrease in the quality of life both physical function in the family. Changes in emotional levels can affect in the personal relationships within the family. The changes of the function in the family is a form of tolerance and family support in the treatment of cancer patients.^[2]

The family support greatly influences the acceptance faced by the patients. From the beginning when the patients receive a diagnosis of cancer, the patients are mostly feel very desperate and facing a rejection from themselves. But, along with the family support, the patients begin to accept the conditions they are in to. Based on the grieving theory according to Kubler-ross, there are some grieving responses that begin with denial, anger, bargaining, depression, until the acceptance stage.^[17] According to the theory, the patient has reached the stage of acceptance, so the patient tries to appreciate their condition.

The final stage after the patients receive a diagnosis of the disease they are facing, the patients begin to have the spirit to recover. The recovery spirit is in the form of the desire to live independently by the patient. This spirit makes the patients take care of themselves not to consume unhealthy foods and to live healthy. The same passion also makes the patients more self-safeguarding by limiting their activities.

The spirit that arises from the support of the family and people around are the most important thing in the process of cancer treatment at home. High enthusiasm for life also has a positive influence on a patient's physical condition, thereby accelerating the healing process. Positive thinking and always have the motivation to recover becomes a positive response for patients. The spirit to participate in all the therapy is also a must for the patients.^[18]

The patients' passion is inform of a desire to live independently and not depend on others. The spirit of the independent living is also a motivation for the patients. This passion can affect the immune system so that it can fight cancer suffered by the patients. The healthy lifestyle of the patient can also affect other family

members. A good lifestyle such as consuming healthy food can prevent the family to the risk of cancer.

CONCLUSIONS

The enthusiasm for recovery of cancer patients is very important in the healing process. The passion to heal cannot arise instantly. The support from the smallest social support systems such as families is needed. This support has led to a change in the paradigm of the cancer patients. The change in paradigm makes the cancer patients be able to receive the entire disease process and the process of its treatments. The acceptance of cancer patients raises the passion to recover. The passion for recovery that is owned by patients is characterized by the desire to live independently. The spirit appears and is applied in real life by implementing healthy living like eating healthy food. The limitation of the activities is also an application of the patient's enthusiasm for recovery. The development of nursing knowledge regarding the smallest community-based cancer control up to the family level needs to be improved. The increasing education to the families and communities about the early signs and symptoms of cancer is very effective in increasing public awareness about the disease. Until in the end, it can reduce the number of mortality of cancer patients. It is to be expected that the government through the ministry of health, or related parts can create some policies on cancer prevention based on families and communities. The formulation of the policies that focus on health education in the smallest community regarding the early signs of cancer and how to prevent it.

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