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A Correlational Study on Reported Coping and Attitude regarding Side Effects of Chemotherapy among Cancer Patients Receiving Chemotherapy in a Selected Cancer Hospital

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Burden of cancer on human lives is complex and miserable. According to the Cancer Atlas, around half of world's new cancer cases and deaths are reported in Asia. It is projected that by 2025 there will be 19.3 million new cancer cases and 11.4 million cancer deaths in less developed regions. Current trend shows that India is one of the country reporting highest number of new cancer cases and deaths at 7.2 percent and 8.3 percent respectively. The conventional chemotherapy is one of the important treatment modalities of cancer treatment practice all around the world.

Chemotherapy is unavoidable, as its benefits in controlling the cancer process overweigh its side effects. Its side effects and toxicities are always an intolerable concern for patients and families. Patients' reluctance towards chemotherapy leads to their discontinuation of treatment. Today's scenario of physicians to control the side effects and improving quality of life has a positive impact on attitude towards chemotherapy.

Need and Significance

The prominent unbearable side effects of chemotherapy such as mucositis, nausea and vomiting, fatigue, cardiotoxicity, neuropaties etc. make the life of patients receiving chemotherapy despaired. Quality of life of patients receiving cancer chemotherapy detoriates substantially. Expecting a promising results, most patients try to cope up with the side effects through professional, psychological and social support. Patient education prior to treatment too has favourable result.

A recent study shows that a positive attitude of patient towards chemotherapy can reduce the intensity of side effects so as to derive maximum benefits. Nurses and other health care professionals can give attention on preparing the patients before chemotherapy to deal with side effects to achieve best possible outcomes.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

1. To assess the reported coping on side effects of chemotherapy among among cancer patients receiving chemotherapy.
2. To assess the attitude on side effects of chemotherapy among cancer patients receiving chemotherapy.
3. To find out the association between reported coping and attitude on side effects of chemotherapy among cancer patients receiving chemotherapy with their selected demographic variables.

Hypothesis

H_1 There will be a significant relationship between reported coping and attitude on side effects of chemotherapy among cancer patients receiving chemotherapy at $p<0.05$ level of significance.

H_2 There will be a significant association between reported coping and attitude on side effects of chemotherapy among cancer patients receiving chemotherapy with their selected demographic variables at $p<0.05$ level of significance.

The conceptual framework for the study was based on Johnsons behaviour system model.

Review of Literature

Mhaske Nilesh (2013) conducted a descriptive study to assess the side effects and coping strategies adopted by cancer patients receiving radiation therapy at Pravara Rural Hospital. Convenient sampling technique was used to select 50 samples and self-prepared rating scales were the tools to assess the level of side effects and attitude on side effects of chemotherapy.

The study revealed psychological side effects were more severe than physical side effects (73%

Table 1: Demographic variables and its association with attitude and coping towards side effects of chemotherapy among patients receiving chemotherapy

S.No.	Demographic variables	f (%)	Association with reported coping p<0.05	Association with attitude p<0.05
1	**Age (in years)**			
	21-30	09	$\chi2$ =1.23 (df=6)	$\chi2$ =0.81 (df=6)
	31-40	25		
	41-50	52		
	Above 50	14		
2	**Gender**			
	Male	65	$\chi2$ = 4.3 (df=2)	$\chi2$ =16.53 (df=2)
	Female	35		
3	**Educational status**			
	No formal education	10	$\chi2$ = 9.23 (df=8)	$\chi2$ =7.78 (df=8)
	Primary school	20		
	Secondary school	30		
	Higher Secondary school	35		
	Graduation and above	05		
4	**Monthly family income (Rs.)**			
	Less than 10000	15	$\chi2$ = 18.63 (df=6)	$\chi2$ =6.89 (df=6)
	10001 to 20000	40		
	20001 to 30000	33		
	30,000 and above	12		
5	**Stage of cancer**			
	Stage I	10	$\chi2$ = 5.28 (df=4)	$\chi2$ =2.33 (df=4)
	Stage II	10		
	Stage III	80		
6	**Co-morbid illness**			
	Systemic diseases	45	$\chi2$ =14.65 (df=6)	$\chi2$ =1.42 (df=6)
	Metabolic diseases	34		
	Others	15		
	None	06		
7	**Number of chemotherapy cycles**			
	1st	20	$\chi2$ =6.32 (df=6)	$\chi2$ =8.21 (df=6)
	2nd	30		
	3rd	30		
	More than three	20		

and 64.8% respectively). The study further found a significant relationship between side effects and coping strategies.

Lorusso D et al (2017) conducted a study to assess the patient's perception of chemotherapy side effects (CSE) in Italy. A total of 761 patients participated and a questionnaire was used to assess their views on five domains such as expectations about CSE and impact on quality of life; treatments to reduce the impact of CSE; sexual life; family relationships/activities; and employment. The study revealed that CSE had a considerable impact on patient QOL. Nausea and vomiting were the most disturbing adverse effects. Patients reported good doctor-patient communication regarding CSE. Cancer and CSE severely affect sexual life. The study concluded that doctor's ability to inform patients about delicate issues, such as the impact of CSE in life process needs to be improved.

Methods and Procedure

The research approach: was quantitative type and research design: descriptive survey. Cancer patients receiving chemotherapy in selected cancer hospital constituted study population.

Sample size was 100; convenient sampling was adopted and the tool adopted was structured questionnaire. It was developed through extensive review of books, journals, published and unpublished articles and reports and expert suggestions. The tools consised of three sections.

Section A - Demographic profile (7 items) of cancer patients receiving chemotherapy such as age, gender, educational status, monthly family income, stage of cancer, co-morbid illness and number of chemotherapy cycles.

Section B - Structured Rating Scale on reported coping towards side effects of chemotherapy, consisting of 15 four-point scale items selected from COPE inventory. The categorisations of score were as follows:

Effective coping: 51-60

Partially effective coping: 36-50

Ineffective coping: 15-35

Section C - Structured Rating Scale on attitude towards side effects of chemotherapy consisted of 15 four-point scale items. The categorisations of score were: Favourable attitude: 51-60; Moderately favourable attitude: 36-50; Unfavourable attitude: 15-35.

Data collection: Administrative approval was taken from the concerned authorities. The investigator explained the purpose of the study before seeking consent. The patients receiving chemotherapy above 20 years of age and able to read and write Hindi were selected. The patients with I, II, and III stage of cancer were included in the study. The researcher used pen and paper method to collect the data. The samples took 20-30 minutes to complete the tool.

Results

The findings were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

The reported coping of patients receiving chemotherapy towards side effects of chemotherapy was significantly associated with monthly family income and co-morbid illness by chi-square values

of 18.63 and 14.65 respectively (Table 1). The attitude of patients receiving chemotherapy towards side effects of chemotherapy was significantly associated with gender by chi-square value of 16.53.

Level of reported coping towards side effects of chemotherapy among patients receiving chemotherapy: Most of the patients (45%) had ineffective coping and 37 percent had partially effective coping. Only 18 percent had effective coping.

It is obvious that more than half of patients had unfavourable attitude of 58 percent. Hardly 28 percent and 14 percent had moderately favourable and favourable attitude respectively.

The relation between reported coping and attitude towards side effects of chemotherapy among patients receiving chemotherapy was higher positive correlation (r=0.7802 at 0.05 level of significance).

Discussion

Majority (45%) of patients reported coping towards side effects of chemotherapy as ineffective, 37 percent had partially effective coping and only 18 percent had effective coping. Patients receiving chemotherapy experienced huge psychological distress (Deanna L Buick) with its side effects and their coping strategies with most of the patient was ineffective coping. On the contrary, Adenipekun A et al found that majority (95%) of patients expressed satisfaction with chemotherapy and coping with the side effects of chemotherapy for those who had prior knowledge about chemotherapy and its side effects. It is evident that the attitude of most of the patients (58%) towards side effects of chemotherapy was unfavourable; 28 percent and 14 percent patients had moderately favourable and favourable attitude respectively. Nurses can perform a vital role in teaching the patients about the side effects and its management prior to its commencement. Positive attitude of patients towards the side effects can help reduce its severity. In a study conducted by Pinquart M et al found that more positive affect balance was associated with higher optimism and lower pessimism regarding side effects of chemotherapy. Higher levels of perceived side-effects of chemotherapy were associated with negative change in affect balance. Thus reported coping and attitude towards side effects of chemotherapy among patients receiving chemotherapy had higher positive correlation. According to Bonnie Annis, in an article published about the importance of positive self-talk in cancer, maintaining a positive attitude and developing an optimistic self-talk can make one healthy physically and psychologically during treatment of cancer.

Table 2: Level of reported coping and attitude on side effects of chemotherapy among patients receiving chemotherapy and the relationship between reported coping and attitude

Level of reported coping	Frequency	Percentage
Effective coping	18	18
Partially effective coping	37	37
Ineffective coping	45	45
Attitude		
Favourable attitude	14	14
Moderately favourable attitude	28	28
Unfavourable attitude	58	58

Implications

Nursing education: The nursing curriculum should have the course plan on self-concept, self-image and self-esteem of cancer patients. Especially it should be added in the subspecialty (oncology) of Masters in Medical Surgical Nursing. The nursing students should be trained to understand and assess the psychology of cancer patients, especially their quality of life.

Nursing practice: Clinical practitioners should routinely assess the psychological aspects of cancer patients through various tools available. Patient-oriented nursing care has higher impact in recovery and alleviation of symptoms. Early identification and proper management can improve the quality of life of patients with cancer. Practitioners can identify the coping strategies and promote positive attitude to help patients to overcome the agonising side effects of chemotherapy.

Nursing research: A huge opportunity is open for nurse researchers to explore the various psychological aspects of cancer patients undergoing treatment. Institutions and organisations should encourage nurses to do more research on psychological suffering due to side effects of cancer treatment modalities. The results can be shared with the concerned authority of the hospital to change the quality of care delivered to patients to make multidisciplinary approach for the complete satisfaction and comfort of patients.

Nursing administration: The nurse administrators should organise seminars/workshops for practitioners on coping and attitude towards treatment modalities of cancer. Psychological aspects of cancer patients receiving treatments may be assessed using proper tools.

Recommendations

A cross sectional study can be done on coping and severity of side effects of chemotherapy in patients receiving chemotherapy. A comparative study can be done on gender and attitude towards the side effects of chemotherapy. An experimental study can be done to assess the effectiveness of various coping strategies and severity of side effects of chemotherapy.

A study can be done to find out the distress level and the factors prevailing in patients from adopting coping strategies.

Conclusion

Side effects of chemotherapy are unavoidable. More than a half of patients have ineffective coping and unfavourable attitude towards side effects of chemotherapy. Strategies to reduce the burden in patients through psychological and physical adaptation can be developed through continuous research.

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