



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Psychology

MENTAL HEALTH OF ONCOLOGY PATIENTS

KEY WORDS: Cancer, Stress, Anxiety ,delusional Disorders , Insomnia .

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the condition go mental health of the oncology patients . For data collection multiple studies were reviewed and it was found that oncology patients suffered from multiple mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, chronic stress , organic brain syndrome ,personality disorders ,etc. This paper also talks about the steps that can be taken by care givers , mental health professionals and oncologists to help these patients. It was observed that interventions on individual levels including therapies go a long way in helping these patients. It was also observed that patients who received help for their mental health showed better results.

INTRODUCTION-

Cancer is a disease in which body cells divide without control and destroy the tissue of the body. The branch of science dealing with cancer is called oncology.

Cancer is a problem that people face irrespective of their socio-economic status. Lung cancer , colorectal cancer , stomach cancer ,liver cancer and breast cancer are the major problems in most countries leading to most deaths. Cancer can be caused by the conversion of pre-cancerous cells to malignant tumour due to an interaction of genetic factors and external factors like physical , chemical or biological carcinogens. Other causes of cancer can include lifestyle, ageing, etc.

A patient's mental health and quality of life are obviously impacted by a cancer diagnosis.

There is an urgent need to develop cancer awareness and prevention policies.

Oncology patients suffer from mental health problems such as elevated stress levels, anxiety, depression, insomnia ,etc. the affected mental health can not only hamper the patient's personal life but also professional life and hence it becomes very important to find solutions to these problems.

It is not only the patient who suffers from mental health problems but also the caregiver and the physician suffers from it.

Presence of psychiatric conditions in cancer patients can lead to multiple problems and it can also worsen their condition, the quality of life also decreases.

Cancer might seem like a death sentence to some patients because we can't dismiss the fact that not all cancers are curable. There can be multiple other factors leading to poor mental health of cancer patients such as the treatment costs, lack of sufficient resources, etc.

When it comes to cancer survivors long term cancer survivors tend to have a fear of cancer recurrences , there are certain factors that might be related to better adjustment levels such as marital or relationship status, age , extent of chemo , pain , and how and to what extend the illness impacted daily life, etc.

Multiple factors can be impacting the mental health of oncologists such as constant worry about patients, when outside of work, concern for personal safety especially during the time of the pandemic, dealing with grieving family members and patients who might be experiencing distress, long working hours ,high burnout rates, etc.

Review Of Literature-

In another study by Alagizy, H.A., Soltan, M.R., Soliman, S.S. et al. (2020) it was observed that onset of anxiety , perceived

stress and depressive symptoms were seventy three point three percent, seventy eight point one percent and sixty eight point six percent respectively, they were common in moderate to severe in patients with a married marital status, those who underwent surgery during their course of treatment ,resided in the countryside , were illiterate and did not have a decent income. Unemployed patients had a higher moderate to severe anxiety found in them commonly than employed patients , p was found to be 0.003 in breast cancer patients.

In a study conducted by Anuk, D., Iizkan, M., Kizir, A. et al. (2019) it was found that 97.5% patients had psychiatric disorders .These disorders included adjustment disorders, mood disorders, anxiety disorders, organic brain syndrome, personality disorders, delusional disorder, and insomnia. The risk factors included cancer recurrence, long term medical ailments, a history of these disorders, socio economic conditions and gender .

In another study conducted by Barre, P.V., Padmaja, G., Rana, S., & Tiamongla (2018) it was found that cancer pervades several facets of the life of a person, requiring a systematic approach to care. Studies involving mixed medical and psychological interventions (MPIs) are, however, scarce. High-level stress and poor life quality (QoL) will impair the prognosis of patients. The study examined the effect of combined medical and psychological treatments on the patients .The results found that the combination MPIs had a high effect on minimising both the total burden and the different components of the stress scale-fear, psychosomatic complaints, knowledge deficiency, and constraints on daily life. In addition to functional and symptom scales, major improvements in QoL and its domains were also observed.

It was found that physical, role and emotional functioning scale, showed an increased levels while there was a decrease in fatigue, pain, insomnia, appetite loss, diarrhea, and constipation of symptoms scales.

In a study conducted by Stark, D., House, A. (2000) it was found that anxiety is usually observed in oncology patients and the early signs of it should be recognised and appropriate actions should be taken by the professionals. the research also talk about the nature of anxiety, and discriminate morbid from normal anxiety the importance of the meaning of events to an individual as an important factor in making people anxious, management strategies and certain communication methods that may help in reducing anxiety.

In a research conducted by Büntzel, J., Klein, M., Keinki, C., Walter, S., Büntzel, J., & Hübner, J. (2020) it was observed that during the lockdown due to coronavirus pandemic high level of mental and physical stress has been triggered.

It was not only the patients who experienced stress but also

the physicians , 98 percent of the doctors believed that restrictions on family visits were contributing towards a negative mental health of their patients . And the patients reported that they observed high levels of emotional stress in their physicians .

More than half of the oncologists were found to be worried about their own mental and physical health.

In a research study by Chandra, P.S., Chaturvedi, S.K., Channabasavanna, S.M. et al. (1998) it was observed that during radiation treatment patients showed a reduced scores on dimensions such as perceived family and support group (primary) , the spiritual well being and family and there was an improvement on dimensions such as coping, social support and positive feeling . No changes were observed on dimensions such as negative feelings and perceived ill health.

In another study by Naughton, M. J., & Weaver, K. E. (2014) it was observed that certain studies showed no ethnic differences when it came to the mental heal of the patient however some studies showed that African Americans showed better emotional well beings than whites especially in the case of breast cancer survivors. When it came to cancer survivors long term cancer survivors tend to have a fear of cancer recurrences , there are certain factors that might be related to better adjustment levels such as marital or relationship status, age , extent of chemo , pain , and how and to what extend the illness impacted daily life. Depression was also found to be associated with poorer overall survival and wrong health behaviours.

In another study by Niedzwiedz, C. L., Knifton, L., Robb, K. A., Katikireddi, S. V., & Smith, D. J. (2019) it was observed that people who had no underlying psychiatric conditions before a cancer diagnosis developed common mental health problem and the people who had a history of psychiatric issues showed a higher mortality rate.

In another study conducted by Silva, N. B., & Osório, F. L. (2018) it was observed that an animal-assisted therapy programme on paediatric oncology patients led to a reduced pain level , irritation and stress , their depressive symptoms also decreased .

This study also concluded that the caregivers also felt an improvement in their mental confusions , anxiety and tension.

In another study conducted by Tone Rustøen, Bruce A. Cooper and Christine Miaskowski (2011) it was found that hope interventions played a significant role in helping oncology patients. It was also found that the hope trajectory remained the same conditioned in case of intrusion or avoidance.

In a study conducted by Vartolomei, L., Vartolomei, M. D., & Shariat, S. F. (2019) it was found that it was found that bladder cancer patients were at high risk of psychological distress including depression and anxiety with a few of them even at risk of committing suicide.

Suggestions-

- Certain steps can be taken to improve the mental health of these oncology patients such as -
- Creating a mental health awareness programme not only for the patients but also for the physicians and caregivers.
- Keeping mental health professionals on board when designing the treatment plans for the patient.
- Developing strategies and executing them for providing affordable mental healthcare for the patient.
- Keeping seminars and workshops for oncologists so that they can be made aware of early symptoms of mental health problems , and the protocol to be followed.
- Support groups should be formed both online and offline.

And the medical professionals should endorse and encourage patients to join support groups.

- In some underdeveloped countries hospitals lack proper resources for treatment of cancer, such countries need to upgrade their hospitals and they should be provided with the required funding.
- The human resources departments in hospitals should make strict policies for maximum working hours so that the doctors are not over-worked.
- Programmes should be designed to raise awareness about cancer so that early signs of cancer are recognised and the treatment can be started.
- Stronger legislative policies should be designed so that certain types of cancers can be avoided.
- Research in psycho - oncology should also be encouraged alongside hosting frequent global and national oncology conventions.
- The World health organisation should step forward and make strict policies and guidelines for individual countries in the area of psycho-oncology.
- Vaccination programmes should be developed so that certain cancers can be avoided.
- Psycho-oncologists should be refereed when designing policies impacting oncology both at the national and global level.
- Governments around the world should be deeply concerned due to the negative impact of cancer on mental health of child and women in developing and underdeveloped of the world, and should keep the gender differences into consideration when designing policies.
- Contacting the NGOs that work for betterment of oncology patients should be encouraged wherein necessary.
- There should be programmes designed for improving the mental health of patients of paediatric oncology .
- Doctors should be trained to use the communication strategies that improves the mental health of patients.
- Grief counselling sessions should be organised not only for the caregivers but also doctors.
- People should be encouraged to visit oncology social workers.
- In places where there is a lack of social workers working in the field of oncology , programmes should be designed to encourage people to take up social work in oncology and the required training programmes should be developed.
- In case it is hard to allow families visitations due to the pandemic should measures should be taken so that the patients stay in touch with their families and loved ones.
- Safety measures should be strictly enforced for the safety of both patients and doctors due to the pandemic.

CONCLUSION-

This study was conducted to determine the condition go mental health of the oncology patients .

For data collection multiple studies were reviewed and it was found that oncology patients suffered from multiple mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, chronic stress , organic brain syndrome ,personality disorders ,etc. This paper also talks about the steps that can be taken by care givers , mental health professionals and oncologists to help these patients. It was observed that interventions on individual levels including therapies , certain communication methods , animal assisted therapies , hope interventions, developing a systematic approach for care, combing medical and psychological treatment, recognising the early signs of the problem go a long way in helping these patients and it is not just the patient but certain therapies can also help the caregiver. It was seen that patients who radiation treatment showed an improvement on dimensions such as coping, social support and positive feelings . The residential location, educational qualification (literate or not) and employment

status also had an impact on the mental health of breast cancer patients. It was also observed that patients who received help for their mental health showed better results.

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