

First reactions of newly diagnosed cancer patients

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Background: Receiving the diagnosis of cancer is a very dramatic experience. The initial reactions of newly-diagnosed cancer patients were “disbelief” and “numbness”. Other reactions were “being stunned” and “feeling lost”. They experience a big shock and then denial and acceptance. They may ask themselves why me? And why has this happened to me? They may face fear of death and become anxious about their future and their children. Because of these feelings they can’t absorb the information given by health practitioners.

Aim: The aim of this qualitative study was to describe their experience of diagnosing a cancer, from the perspective of cancer patients who wrote on a cancer blog.

Methods: A document examining, one of the qualitative methods was used. This method was preferred because of allowing the researcher to reach a wide sampling and there aren’t physical, behavioral or emotional interactions between patients. 56 of 530 writings were about the first reactions to diagnosis. Therefore whole of these writings were taken for the sampling.

Findings and Conclusion: Two main themes emerged from writings as “the emotional reactions” and “concerns about the family”. The first reactions of cancer patients are shock, denial and cry. They get panic and don’t know what to do. Moreover they encounter the fear of death. Also patients prefer to hide their illness from others and they think about the future of their family. A qualitative analysis of writings on blog showed cancer patients had different reactions to the diagnosis of cancer. In many aspects, these findings were similar with previous studies. Because of blog users are from all around the country, we can say this study adds in depth information from a developing country with a multi-ethnic population. Also this study provide an information for nurses that how they approach newly diagnosed cancer.

Implications for nursing practice: Nurses can only provide effective and comprehensive nursing care to cancer patients if they fully understand the emotional experiences. Nurses may plan a supportive programme in order to struggle with the first emotions and take action for the cure and to meet the needs of cancer patients. Implications include the need for enhancing support systems and providing the opportunity for the patients to talk about their experiences.

Biography

Hatice Başkale is a assistant professor at pediatric nursing department, Denizli School of Health, Denizli, Türkiye. She finished her Baccalaurate education at 2001, master education at 2005 and PhD education at 2010. She has articles about child nutrition and qualitative research with hemodialysed adolescents.