

PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS FOR ELDERLY PATIENTS WITH CANCER ILLNESS

AUTHORS:

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BACKGROUND/RATIONALE

Treating an illness such as cancer in the elderly and supporting their families are global health priorities, with psychosocial care a key aspect in physical and mental wellbeing. There are both proven and developing techniques to upgrade therapeutic services in this population, and negotiate cross-cultural and familial issues.

METHODOLOGY

I present a dynamic, structured, practical psychoeducational workshop for healthcare workers, founded on theoretical concepts and acknowledging differing social, cultural, geographic and family contexts. Group members will actively participate in interventions based on psychosocial models especially adapted for the aging population with cancer illness and their families. Techniques include reminiscence, mutuality, body integrity, sense of self, group interaction, card games (myth, habitat and relationships) and music (remembrance, meaning and hope).

IMPACT ON PRACTICE

Psychosocial interventions in this population will be oriented toward understanding who they now are, to setting specific short-term goals and to understanding the sociocultural context. They have proven therapeutic impact, reducing loneliness, isolation, despair, guilt and dependency, promoting ego integrity (Erikson) and responding to differing expressions of grief in family members.

DISCUSSION (LESSONS LEARNED, FUTURE DIRECTION)

This approach addresses the unique physical and psychiatric challenges faced by elderly people diagnosed with cancer illness, and their families. It is designed to counter aging stereotypes, foster hope in this fast-growing population, helping them find harmony with themselves, their families and their lives, free of regret, with meaning and inner satisfaction.