Coping process in adults with leukemia undergoing hematopoietic stem cell transplantation”

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Abstract
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Background: Leukemia and hematopoietic stem cell transplantation (HSCT) create physical, psychological, social, and spiritual distresses in patients. Understanding the coping process with this threatening situation in this group will assist health care professionals in providing holistic care to the patients. The aim of the present study is understanding the coping process in adults with leukemia undergoing HSCT.

Method: This study is a qualitative design using grounded theory approach that conducted in \( \text{91-92} \). Ten adults with acute leukemia undergoing HSCT were recruited from the Hematology-Oncology Research Center and Stem Cell Transplantation, Tehran, Iran. The purposeful sampling was then continued by theoretical sampling as the data/theory highlighted the direction which further sampling needed to follow. Finally, theoretical saturation as established by the logics of the grounded theory analysis was achieved. Major source of data collection was in-depth interviews. In this regard, semi – structure interviews were conducted by the researcher. The interviews were scheduled for pre-transplant and post-transplant in the HSCT units and the final interview took place between months \( \text{9} \) to \( \text{9} \) post-transplant when participants had been discharged from the inpatient units. Totally, \( \text{9} \) interviews were conducted with participants. Three written narrative also achieved from them. Data was analyzed by Corbin and Strauss (\( \text{91-92} \)) approach.

Findings: Five categories/themes emerged from the data including: perceived threat, suspended between fear and hope, rebirth, coping strategies and structural-contextual factors. The central category, rebirth, represented the main theme of the research, and all major categories had been related to it. This concept appeared frequently in the data during all stages of the disease. This category included "tendency to survive", "tendency to return normal life" and "finding meaning". "Suspended between fear and hope" as "basic psychological process" in coping process of patients had a vacillation nature.

Conclusion: Suffering from leukemia and experiencing HSCT are events that are uniquely perceived by patients. This threatening situation can significantly affects perception of patients and cause the temporary or permanently alters in patients’ life. Health care professionals can help these patients to effective coping by deeper understanding of the coping process and effective interventions including, identifying effective coping strategies, coping facilitators, and maintaining factors of hope and reinforcing them; identifying ineffective coping strategies, coping inhibitors, and creators of fear and stress and modifying them; identifying unique needs of each patient and trying to resolve them; providing suitable information in appropriate time; more attention to spiritual needs of patients and help them to finding meaning of unique experience; providing facilities for social support and help to role playing of patients; understanding patients and better interaction with them; more attention to family, religious and culture concepts in caring of these patients; providing efficient facilities; enrichment of stem cell bank; establishing HSCT centers in other cities in Iran etc.

Keywords: cancer, coping, fear, grounded theory, hope, leukemia, hematopoietic stem cell transplantation