Results: Fathers reported higher mental wellbeing than mothers and more mothers than fathers reported symptoms of depression. Within the same family, mothers (n=70) reported lower mental wellbeing and more depression, gastrointestinal, urinary and metabolic symptoms than fathers (n=70). Parents of children on treatment (n=92) reported lower social and mental wellbeing and more symptoms of depression than parents with children off treatment (n=101).

Conclusion: The findings suggest that fathers experience a better quality of life than mothers and that parents of children off cancer treatment enjoy a better quality of life than parents of children on treatment.

1261 POSTER

Cancer patients existential questions - a qualitative interview study with hermeneutic analysis

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The aim of this study was to require for more knowledge about what kind of existential questions are actualised in connection with a cancer diagnosis, what patients reflected upon and what support they got from the nursing staff regarding these questions.

The method constitutes a qualitative content analysis as interpreted by Føllesdal, Walløe and Elster (1993). As theoretical frame of reference applies analysis language emanating from Jeffners stipulated life of philosophy definition was used. Ten breast and prostate cancer patients that had received curative treatment were interviewed.

The results showed that the cancer diagnosis caused the patients to reflect upon three main categories: their life, the illness and death. Questions raised were about the meaning of life, the threat of suffering and death, the importance of relations and health and body image. Loss of life values that were important, such as health and sexuality could lead to loss of meaning of life. The patient who could see the illness as a part of the pattern they saw for their whole life was more successful in dealing with the existential questions. The support that was given to the patient came mostly from their family and friends. The patients reported few conversations with nursing staff about existential questions. Not all patients required that kind of support. Despite this they felt supported by the professional attitude from the nursing staff.

Conclusions that could be drawn are: Five of the patients had an attitude of life that could give them support in dealing with the illness. All patients had different views of life and for some of these patients the cancer diagnosis gave a new understanding about what is valuable in life. For others the illness was seen as something purely negative. Some patients said that other situations in life, rather than the cancer diagnosis, made them consider of the meaning of life.

1262 POSTER

Evaluation of the results of a multi disciplinary intervention with patients with colorectal cancer

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Background: Studies have demonstrated that an early psychoeducational intervention helps patients and their families in becoming active partners in the treatment process, improves their coping abilities, ameliorates their quality of life, and increases confidence in recovery chances. In order to relate to the many patients' needs from a holistic perspective, we constructed a multi-disciplinary short-term intervention (MDSTI). Patients were invited to an initial intake outpatient session with a physician, immediately followed by a meeting with a social worker and a nurse where further explanations were given, and psychosocial needs assessed. Interaction with patients was then maintained throughout treatment, allowing for an ongoing communication and assistance channel. The aim of the current presentation is to prsesnt the findings and conclusions of a qualitative evaluation of the MDSTI.

Method: Research sample included 20 new patients accepted for treatment for colorectal cancer during January 2003 (MDSTI group), and a second group of 20 patients who were accepted to treatment before the MDSTI was implemented (a control group). Self-report questionnaires (BSI, PAIS, a socio-demographic questionnaire and a medical data collection form) were administered among the MDSTI group patients at baseline (prior to the initial meeting T1) and following 8 weeks (T2). Patients at the control group filled the same questionnaires only once after having completed 8 weeks of treatment in the gastrointestinal unit (T2).

Results: We found women reported more severe anxiety ($p=.004$) and somatization symptoms ($p=.011$) than men. Findings showed that following 8 weeks of treatment, patients in the MDSTI reported a significant improvement ($p>.05$) in most distress symptoms: depression, anxiety, somatization, obsessive-compulsive tendencies, hostility, and phobic anxiety. Patients in this group also developed a more positive orientation towards their physicians and the treatment they received, when compared with the patients in the control group.

Conclusion: An ongoing multi-disciplinary intervention reduces stress, increases coping and encourages an improved atitude towards the medical staff and treatment.

1263 POSTER

Nursing staff's experiences of the problems concerning practical, emotional and informational support given for families of patients with cancer

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Background: The results reported in this paper are drawn from a larger study aimed at describing and explaining the support provided by nursing staff to the family members of patients with cancer. The purpose of this component of the study was to explore the problems related to practical, emotional and informational support.

Material and methods: The structured questionnaires were sent to 225 nurses working in five central hospitals in Finland. A total of 166 nurses participated. The response rate was 74%. The problems related to support were asked by open-ended questions. The analysis of the responses relied on the method of content analysis.

Results: The analysis of open-ended questions is unfinished at present but will be completed before the conference. During the presentation the major categories and subcategories formed from the data and examples of original responses will be introduced to the audiance.

Conclusions: The knowledge of the problems related to the support given for the family members of patients with cancer create opportunities for the development of nursing practice in hospitals.

1264 POSTER

Meeting the needs of male partners of women with breast cancer: An exploratory study

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Background: A diagnosis of breast cancer can have a devastating effect on a woman, her partner, family and friends. Despite extensive nursing research into the psychosocial distress and information and support needs of women with breast cancer, there are very few studies examining the impact on their male partners.

Materials and methods: The aim of this exploratory study was to increase health care professionals knowledge and understanding of male partners information and support needs in order to develop the supportive care services appropriately. Data was collected through five semi-structured tape recorded interviews and then analysed thematically.

Results: The study demonstrated that the male partners concerns and information/support needs changed throuhout the 'cancer journey'. During the interviews there was a sense of the male partners 'sharing' the women's experiences. The partners highlighted a need to maintain normality within their relationship and their home life but described changing roles and responsibilities. The study demonstrated differing knowledge levels relating to treatments.

Conclusion: The study gave an insight into the male partners perceptions of their experiences and their information/support needs. There were striking similarities between the partner's concerns and those recognised in the literature relating to women. The study indicated areas that need to be addressed. Most importantly, it demonstrated that there is a need for further studies to be undertaken to truly understand the complexity of the needs of the male partners of women with breast cancer.