Coping Styles with Anxiety in Patients with Cancer Receiving Chemotherapy

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Abstract—Cancer is among the most common chronic disease creating challenges in physical, mental and spiritual aspects of life. The aim of this study was to investigate coping with anxiety in patients with cancer receiving chemotherapy in university hospitals of Tehran University of Medical Sciences. This correlation-descriptive study was carried out on 276 patients with cancer receiving chemotherapy in university hospitals of Tehran University of Medical Sciences during 2013-2014. The subjects were selected using cluster sampling. Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses were conducted to analyze the data. Differences were considered significant at the p<0.05 level. The mean total score for anxiety was 30.16±49.90. Problem focused coping style was used significantly higher than emotional focused coping styles by patients with cancer. Problem focused coping style is important in adjusting to cancer in patients with cancer.

Keywords—Anxiety, Coping styles, Cancer.

I. INTRODUCTION

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in developing countries following cardiovascular diseases and the third leading cause of death in developing countries. Cancer is also the third most common cause of death in Iran. Each year, an estimated 3000 Iranians die of cancer [1]. Anxiety is an adaptive human experience that may occur at all ages and serves to help draw attention to, avoid or cope with imminent threat and danger. Anxiety has been described as a common currency for psychopathology, indicating that it is a first line and universal way for us to respond to stress and threat [2]. It is more prominent in patients with cancer. However, those patients who feel what has happened to them and who are capable to overcome their condition, can adjust to cancer [3]. Cancer diagnosis which is followed by treatments such as chemotherapy and radiotherapy causes feeling of apprehension and anxiety in patients [4]. The present study was carried out to determine the coping style used in patients with cancer receiving chemotherapy in university hospitals of Tehran University of Medical Science to cope with anxiety.

Material and Methods

This correlation-descriptive study was carried out on 276 patients with cancer receiving chemotherapy in university hospitals of Tehran University of Medical Sciences during 2013-2014. The subjects were selected using cluster sampling. Data collection tools included demographic questionnaire developed by researchers and ways of coping questionnaire (WOCQ), and depression, anxiety and stress scales (DASS-42). Coping styles were evaluated using standard questionnaire and the Lazarus “Ways of Coping” questionnaire (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980) [5]. Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses were conducted to analyze the data using SPSS 20.

Results

A total of 267 (126 female and 151 male) cancer patients on chemotherapy with mean age of 52 (age range 18-84) years old participated in the study. 57 (20.7%), 22 (8%), 47 (17%), 45 (16.3%) and 105 (38%) of patients had mean anxiety scores of 0-7, 8-9, 10-14, 15-19 and ≥20, respectively; according to which, mean scores ≥20 were observed in higher proportion and mean scores 8-9 were observed in lower proportion of patients. Of coping styles, positive reappraisal (20/21±4/56), escape-avoidance (19/97±4/14), self-controlling (19/26±4/23), seeking social support (18/36±4/16) and planful problem solving (16/24±3/93) had the higher scores.

Discussion

In our study anxiety was observed in considerable proportion of patients with cancer. Studies show that survivors of cancer are mainly prone to experiencing a high incidence of psychological problems following their diagnosis. Prevalence rates for depression and anxiety symptoms have been documented to be as high as 62% [6],[7].

On the other hand, the research literature has typically emphasized the potential for depression and anxiety in patients with cancer. However, the prevalence of depression and anxiety disorders among cancer patients is still subject to much debate[8],[9], partly due to the use of self-reported scales rather than structured diagnostic interviews in most prior studies [10].

Our study results showed that patients with cancer used positive reappraisal, escape-avoidance, self-controlling, seeking social support and planful problem solving coping styles more than other coping styles. There are other reports indicating that the above copying styles are frequently used.
in patients with cancer to cope with mental health disorders [11], [12].

V. CONCLUSION

We have shown that problem focused coping style was used significantly higher than emotional focused coping styles by patients with cancer.

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REFERENCES