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Living with diabetes mellitus: An analysis of patients' perspectives

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Background: Diabetes mellitus (DM) is a complex and chronic disease with multiple complications leading to increased mortality and poor quality of life. How the disease is perceived by the individual, the meaning of the disease, illness and treatment compliance, and psychosocial difficulties are some of the issues that need to be addressed. Mental, emotional, social and psychosexual problems and conflicts arise because this is a lifelong disease and requires a continuous controlled lifestyle.

Aim: The aim of this study was to determine what it means for patients to live with diabetes, to reveal patients' feelings, thoughts and wishes, and to examine their perspectives and coping strategies regarding the disease.

Method: The study population consisted of all the patients treated for Type II DM at the Department of Endocrinology at a University Hospital (N=350). The sample consisted of 37 patients meeting the inclusion criteria in the study. Data were collected by asking the participants a total of three questions in the individual in-depth interview form. After transcribing the recorded interviews, the transcripts were combined with observation notes and then raw data were transferred to computer. Finally, a content analysis was performed.

Results: Out of the patients in the study, 50% were female, 80% were married and the mean age was 57 years. Three main themes with 10 subthemes emerged from the content analysis: "Experiences during the Diagnosis Stage", "Experiences after Diabetes Diagnose", and "Management of and Coping with Diabetes". The results showed that diabetes adversely affected the participants' lives; they experienced mental, physical and social problems related to the illness; and they exhibited a fatalistic approach feeling convinced that everything comes from God and feeling thankful in coping with these problems. Also, after being diagnosed with diabetes, more than half of the participants rearranged their lives by doing exercise, going for a walk, paying particular attention to nutrition and diet, visiting their doctors, and regularly checking their blood sugar.

Conclusion: In the management of diabetes, patients can adapt to the disease by expressing their emotions and thoughts and by realizing the meaning of life with the disease. Nurses have extremely important responsibilities in this process.

Biography

Mualla Yilmaz completed her PhD in Psychiatric Nursing at Marmara University Institute of Health Sciences in 2007. She started working as an Assistant Professor at Mersin University School of Health in 2009 and became an Associate Professor in 2014. She holds the post of Head of the Department of Psychiatric Nursing and Deputy Director of Mersin University School of Health and she has published many articles in international and national journals. Her main area of research is Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry Nursing. She is currently conducting studies on psychosocial problems of chronic diseases (e.g. diabetes, kidney failure, heart failure).

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