

Psychological first aid among recently diagnosed cancer patients: Nursing view

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Cancer is a life-threatening illness and has the capacity to touch all aspects of an individual's health: Physical, psychological, cognitive, social, functional, economic and spiritual. Cancer diagnosis and treatment and their sequelae are thought as adverse experiences, for most individuals, they represent significant stressors and for some, the diagnosis of cancer is a traumatic event (Somasundaram & Devamani 2016). Cancer is considered as a potential stressor that can lead to significant psychological problems, including symptoms of depression and anxiety, as well as symptoms of post-traumatic stress. Experiencing distress in response to cancer is common and can occur at critical times throughout the course of the disease especially, after diagnosis. Patients' emotional reactions may range from normal feelings of fear and vulnerability to more psychopathologies (Dimitrov et al., 2019).

Recently diagnosed cancer patients may experience cancer-related stress reactions such as intrusive thoughts (e.g., re-experiencing the trauma) and avoidance (e.g., denial of the event and emotional numbing), thoughts and avoidance among cancer patients varies from 12% to 75% and 3% to 14%, respectively. Intrusive thoughts and avoidance may be predictors of psychological problems and can therefore be used to identify patients who are at risk of possible future problems involving psychological distress and/or emotional reactivity (Arving et al., 2019). By comparison with other serious illnesses and non-medical traumatic events, cancer is argued to be a unique stressor. Therefore, post-traumatic stress and growth are common responses to cancer diagnosis (Arnedo et al., 2019; Turner et al., 2018). Posttraumatic growth is defined as experiencing positive psychological and psychosocial change as a result of a traumatic life experience (McDonnell et al., 2018). Post traumatic growth, generates a cognitive recognition of improvements in individuals' personal strengths and spirituality, in their relationships with others and in the appreciation of their own life (Anna Casellas-Grau et al., 2017). Post-traumatic growth (PTG) can be initiated by a major life crisis that challenges or even shatters the individual's perception of the world and the self. (PTG) represents a transformation of personal growth from pre-trauma to post-trauma and is independent of other psychosocial variables such as quality of life and hope (Turner, Hutchinson & Wilson 2018).

Psychological first aid is a set of tools designed to address stress-related reactions among people immediately after a crisis or traumatic event, helping them feel safe, reducing stress related symptoms and fostering positive coping strategies that enable persons to meet their basic needs and ensure their linkage to critical resources and social support. These are important steps in initiating the recovery process (Birkhead & Vermeulen 2018). The World Health Organization (WHO) define psychological first aid as a human, supportive response to a fellow human being who is suffering and who may need psychological support. It includes interventions such

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as reflective listening, rapport, helping people to connect with others and providing information and practical support to address their needs (Dieltjens et al., 2014).

Cancer diagnosis represents one of the most distressing events that human beings can meet in their life. As a consequence, cancer patients can experience psychological problems, psychological distress and difficulties in their quality of life. Cancer in fact, a shattering experience that violates the meaning system, which allows people to have the perception of living in a coherent world (Acevedo-Ibarra et al., 2019; Cafaro et al., 2019). Recently diagnosed cancer patients often must tolerate not only physical pain, but also enormous emotional pressure and huge financial burden (Liu et al., 2017). Despite, more than half of the cancer patients can be treated successfully, they are at increased risk for psychological problems and the unmet psychological needs. Therefore, there is growing attention on the important role of psychological first aid for improving psychological resilience, post traumatic growth and preventing or reducing psychological problems among cancer patients.

Post-traumatic growth is a positive personal change that occur after experiencing a potentially traumatic event. Post-traumatic growth does not really mean the end of pain and discomfort, a favorable perspective toward crisis or the lack of trauma. PTG is determined by not taking life for granted, having better interpersonal relationships, changing the priorities of life and personal strength, detecting possible new coping strategies, better appreciation of life and promoting spiritual development. Recently, traumatic events, especially serious diseases like cancer have increased the need for psychological support interventions. A number of expert groups refer to psychological first aid (PFA) as the first and the most 5 urgently needed psychological intervention to be provided immediately after traumatic events. There has been renewed interest in psychological first aid, which is designed to be delivered to individuals or groups immediately after exposure to a traumatic event.

Psychiatric Consultation Liaison Nurse (PCLN) faces stressful, traumatic or difficult situations every day and have to adapt to stressful and traumatic situations. They can play a leading role in assisting after major trauma due to their work experience and training. (PCLN) can identify urgent and basic needs of individuals experiencing intense stress, using a supportive and compassionate approach therefore, they can provide the appropriate physical and psychological support most acutely needed by the affected individuals. Thanks to their communication, knowledge and skills, (PCLN) can help individuals use rational coping behaviors in difficult situations, and to recover their strengths. They can support individuals' ability to restructure their own lives and regain self-confidence after exposure to traumatic events.

Biography

Somaya El-Sayed Abou-Abdou is professor of psychiatric & mental health nursing. The ex- dean faculty of nursing, Suez Canal University, Ismailia. Egypt. Now the vice dean, post-graduate and research affairs, also the visiting scientist, Queen's University School of Nursing, Kingston, Canada. A consultant in nursing education for Maastricht University. Active membership of psycho oncology society. Reviewer of many international & national journals for example in Archives of Psychiatric Nursing journal the editor the faculty of nursing scientific journal. His research interest in oncology area, community & psychiatry mental health nursing, human sexuality & psych-oncology nursing.