

Creative Writing - An Under-Utilized Cancer Therapy

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Introduction

The diagnosis of cancer can have a significant negative impact on the mind of individuals and their families. Safeguarding their mental health well being is the need of the hour. Verbal expression of these negative emotions and feelings may be difficult. Creative writing provides a therapeutic release from all such thoughts. This is clearly the way forward empowering cancer survivors to march ahead with full confidence on their road to recovery.

What is Creative Writing?

"Writing is the painting of the voice!" – Voltaire

Creativity is often considered to be the gift of God. The basic ingredients needed for creativity are confidence, observation skills, humility, mindfulness, curiosity, resourcefulness, energy and action. Creative writing is any piece of writing breaking boundaries of usual professional, academic or technical literature. This could be fictional or non-fictional. Usually this is an originally composed piece of art which may be in prose or poetry, as a short story or a novel, or even as a biography. The need to write may be for keeping a record of significant life experiences, sharing these experiences with a group of interested individuals and enhancement or preservation of mental and physical health.

Creative Writing- The Cancer Therapy

Creative writing can change the lives of people diagnosed with cancer undergoing treatment. The inner self finds peace after expression of thoughts and emotions, thus promoting healing.

The American Cancer Society published findings from 27 randomized trials on more than 1500 cancer patients. All these studies examined the effect of creative writing as a therapy on the psychological symptoms and quality of life of these cancer patients [1].

Creative writing as a therapy made a significant improvement in quality of life of cancer patients significantly reducing depression, pain and anxiety associated with the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. Once, creative writing was discontinued, the positive impact on their quality of life also disappeared [1].

"A true piece of writing is a dangerous thing, it can change your life"
– Tobias Wolff

The Changing Scenario is the Need of the Hour

Pilot studies are now published to ascertain the impact of creative writing on the mood of cancer patients [2]. Cancer patients can attend workshops of creative writing leading to mood improvement [2]. Writing workshops bring emotional healing to doorsteps. Often patients with cancer receive no guidance towards written expression of their emotions. They can write during their course of treatment and even thereafter. Cancer survivors can be encouraged to involve newly diagnosed cancer patients through creative writing workshops as a part of the support group endeavour. There is a 'Creative Writing Institute' which has a library and runs courses in creative writing. All that one can do is to motivate patients towards picking up a pen and paper and just write. That is in real terms a scholarship. Newsletters are brought

about initially with the help of caregivers then solely by the patients themselves [3-5].

Conclusions

Writing builds confidence in the writer and restores their emotional well being. This is an art of allowing self analysis and boosting self esteem. Truly, creative writing is a much under-utilized tool, as of now. It is very simple, just encourage patients to write. Initially they will find difficulties but very soon the crisis will be over. What will emerge will be an innovative piece of art with the deepest emotion benefitting the readers.

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