

PSYCHO-ONCOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY. MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO THE TREATMENT OF MALIGNANT DISEASE

Ivana Ljubičić Bistrović & Rudolf Ljubičić

Clinical Hospital Center Rijeka, Rijeka, Croatia

Contemporary medicine should be based on a multidisciplinary approach that is personalized and that encompasses all human dimension (rational, mental and spiritual) in order to make the treatment process successful. Being diagnosed with a malignant disease poses a threat to the integrity of the afflicted person, and at that point, almost all previously successful ways of coping with stress cease to function. The psychological precursors of cancer include stressful experiences, depression and personality traits. Stress weakens the body's defense powers (endocrine and immune system), which in turn can lead to malignant illness. In our culture, emotional responses to the disease are considered less important compared to the physical health although today numerous cases and studies confirm that emotional resolvment leads to the relaxation of the whole organism which has a significantly effect on treatment and recovery from the disease. In the treatment process it is important to take care of mental health, i.e. emotional response to the illness, and depending on the severity of symptoms to involve a psychiatrist or a psychotherapist. A successful treatment of malignant disease cannot be achieved without active participation of the patient who has to accept the disease and empower himself/herself to ease the healing process and to learn how to live with malignant disease. Spirituality plays an important role in this process as serious illnesses change the dynamics of the life one has known so far. The change can be a chance for spiritual growth which is often neglected by the modern way of life. The path of spiritual growth is individual and in accordance with the interests and preferences of the person and aims at taking control over one's emotional reactions to the illness, facilitates dealing with and overcoming the issues brought on by the diseases. Clinical studies confirm that spirituality and religiosity can reduce the occurrence of anxiety and depression in patients with malignant disease. Highly expressed religiosity measured as the power of religious beliefs proved to be important with the lower emergence of depression in female patients with breast cancer.

Psycho-Oncology is a multidisciplinary approach and the modern medicine increasingly recognizes the role of spirituality in treatment and recovery.

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SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION AS AN AGENT OF RECOVERY IN PATIENTS WITH DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

Andromahi Naumovska & Dimitar Bonevski

Psychiatric Hospital "Skopje", UCIM- Medical Faculty, Skopje, North Macedonia

Spirituality has been found to be an important component in the recovery of severe mental illness. During the past two decades, researches has connected spirituality to a variety of benefits, including increased hope, well-being, self-esteem, social supports, motivation towards growth, as well as decreased depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. Studies show that religion and spirituality are associated with decreased rates of mental illness, but the association between religion, spirituality and mental illness are still understudied. So this study of 31 patients with depression and 31 patients with anxiety disorders, have examined the influence of the support of the spiritual guide and the support of the psychotherapist. The study design used semi-structured open-ended interview about who attended or not a 'spirituality guide' together with psychotherapy and their individual subjective feelings of mental wellness through that social support. Data shows that those who reported use of spiritual guide and psychotherapy generally have more positive individual's subjective feelings of mental wellness. Accessing a spiritual support together with psychotherapy may be useful within mental health recovery from the view point of those in receipt of it. Spirituality can be viewed as a vital dimension of holistic practice and person-centered care, as a form of stress reduction, and mindfulness cognitive therapy. The clinicians who are aware of the common themes among the faith and religious believes and can understand the patient's belief system are better prepared to address more appropriate, in crisis situations.