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Barriers to symptoms management among family caregivers of cancer patients

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Introduction: Family care givers experience psychosocial distress while caring for cancer patients. Usually terminally ill patients spend their end stages of life at home being cared for by their families, without formal home care services. The caregivers experience many barriers to manage the symptoms experienced by their beloved one who is suffering from cancers. Fear of addiction may be an important barrier to cancer pain management. Depression among caregivers is mainly due to the fear of unemployment during caregiving, being the spouse of a patient, burden of caregiving and disturbance of personal life. Family caregivers experience many difficulties and have increased responsibilities during and after the treatment for cancer. Caregiver's sleep disturbances contribute to depression, anger and anxiety.

Aim: Objective of the study was to identify the barriers to symptom management among caregivers of cancer patients.

Methods & Materials: A descriptive study was conducted among 768 family caregivers of cancer patients selected by convenient sampling technique. Data were collected from caregivers those who were caring their beloved one at least two to three hours per day and who were above 20 years of age. Data were collected by structured interview with a barriers questionnaire and demographic proforma after obtaining the consent from the caregiver.

Result: Result shows that 216 (28.1%) of the participants were in the age group between 31 and 40 years, 454 (59.1%) were females and most of them 350 (45.6%) were spouses. With regard to the barriers, most i.e., 423 (55.1%) of the participants had less confidence on diseased patient to manage symptoms, 681 (88.6%) had lack of awareness about pain assessment and management, Majority i.e., 654 (85.1%) of them had financial problems in the family, 750 (97.7%) had lack of knowledge about the disease and 606 (78.9%) had reported that due to hospitalization caregivers could not continue their job/education and 696 (90.6%) had reported that they were unable to carry out their routine work due to hospitalization of the patients.

Discussion: Similar findings reported by Valeberg, Miaskowski, Paul, & Rustøen in 2015, that concerns of both the patients and their Family Caregivers (FCGs) about pain and the use of analgesics may act as barriers to effective pain management.

Conclusion: The caregivers experience many barriers to the proper management of symptoms of cancer patients. The family caregivers need to be empowered on management of cancer care.

Biography

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