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The influencing factors of unmet information needs among cancer patients in Korea

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Background: As cancer is a threatening experience full of uncertainty to patients themselves, it creates a huge gap of knowledge which results in needs of information. However, even though information needs are known to have one of the highest unmet needs among patient needs, identifying whether needed information is met or unmet did not have much attention in contrast to assessing information needs.

Method: Cancer patients were recruited from outpatient cancer treatment and consultation centers, cancer education center, and inpatient clinic. In order to measure information needs and needs-weighted unmet information needs of patients, a survey tool called Toronto Information Needs Questionnaire (TINQ) was used. Demographic, disease, psychological and cognitive, interpersonal, and environmental factors were analysed using hierarchical multiple regression analysis.

Result: While treatment and physical domain scored high in needs, psychosocial and disease had high scores in unmet needs. Multiple regression analysis was conducted based on independent variables suggested by Wilson's model. Among patient's general characteristics, education level and treatment status were identified as significant variables. When these socio-demographic and disease factors were controlled, presence of companion in hospital, which is included in the interpersonal characteristic, was found to be an influencing factor.

Conclusion: Through this study, differences in unmet needs of information according to patient characteristics and influencing variables were identified. Verifying whether needs are met or unmet and how it is related with patient factors will be able to help tailor and customize information provision and improve qualities of supportive and patient centered care for patients.

Biography

Minjung Lee is a PhD candidate at Seoul National University, Department of Public Health Science, under the supervision of Dr. Myoungsoon You. Her research interests include Patient centered communication (PCC), Patient-physician interaction and Health risk communication. Prior to joining graduate school, she was working with AMOREPACIFIC R&D center as a researcher for 4 years.

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