

Quality of-life in male cancer patients at Kenyatta National Hospital, Nairobi

Abstract:

BACKGROUND: The quality of life of cancer patients is likely to be influenced by psychological reactions of the cancer patients yet there are no documented issues related to quality of life in cancer patients in Kenyan hospitals. **OBJECTIVE:** To investigate issues which affect the quality of life in male cancer patients. **DESIGN:** Prospective cross sectional study. **SETTING:** Kenyatta National Hospital, Nairobi, Kenya. **METHODS AND SUBJECTS:** Cancer patients above 12 years of age were interviewed during the course of their stay in the hospital, specifically to gather information on; semi structured questions and a modified Beck's 24 item depression inventory with a view to solicit for their reaction on issues which pertains to quality of life. **MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES:** Age group, level of education, tribe, geographical place (province) of birth, chief complains, main concerns, views on doctors, contact with psychiatrist and psychologist, the anatomic site of cancer, treatment given and responses on modified Beck's depression inventory. **RESULTS:** Forty two patients were studied, their age range 13-72 years, mean 43.2 and peak 13-26 years. Forty seven per cent of cases had no formal education. The cancers were gastrointestinal tract 33%, blood and lymphoid tissue (26%), bone and muscle (11.9%), skin (9.4%) and genitourinary tract (4.8%). Treatment given was chemotherapy, radiotherapy and surgery. Ninety three per cent were unable to cope. Chief complaints were pain, inability to work, feeling miserable and concerns were families, health and work retardation. Modified Beck's depression score was 20%, with major issues being; work retardation, insomnia, weight loss, and anorexia. Most affected were, age group 27-35 years (and least 13-26 years), uneducated, living in Nairobi (city), having carcinomas, treatment with combined surgery and radiotherapy. Low education level and residence in Nairobi coped poorly. Radiation therapy group appeared to cope better than other modalities. **CONCLUSION:** The issues affecting the quality of life of male cancer patients stated were pain, inability to work, poor coping with cancer and psychological reactions of work retardation, insomnia, weight loss, fatigability and depression. Gambling, suicidal ideas and social withdrawal were minimal. Other concerns were families, health and work