

Cultural myths and perceived treatment outcome in caregivers of cancer patients in India

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Background: In India greater number of population live in rural or semi urban areas where cancer has been still not understood from a medical viewpoint but from an unknown, untreatable misfortune condition outlook. Many cultural as well as social myths about the process and outcome of treatment are very much in existence in Indian population.

The main objective of the present study was to explore how caregivers of cancer patients were predisposed to conventions and cultural beliefs about cancer treatment in India.

Materials & Methods: The study sample (N=240) were mostly from rural and semi urban areas who came to larger city for treatment of their family members or first degree relatives. The test batteries used were Duke Health Profile, Locus of Control, Bells Adjustment Inventory, Alternate Treatment Questionnaire, Parental Sensitization Index and Socio-economic Scale.

Results: Most (75%) caregivers have strong inclination about use and efficacy of unconventional treatment and myths. The subjects who reflected external locus of control (LOC), higher disease conviction (DC), and higher perceived impact of negative life events are more vulnerable to myths. The subjects with higher neuroticism and maladjustment at home are easier to be persuaded.

Conclusion: In India cancer patients seldom make decision about own treatment notwithstanding caregivers make most decisions about treatment requirement. Thus caregivers' cultural belief plays a major role in preferred treatment intervention and ultimate outcome of the patients affected by cancer.

References:

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