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Perspective of oncology patients during the COVID pandemic-19

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Introduction: The literature confirms that oncology patients have a high susceptibility to SARS-CoV-2 infection and its consequences (Zhang et al., 2020). In Italy, 20% of COVID-19 patient deaths were from cancer (Onder, Rezza, & Brusaferro, 2020). There is no data on the prospects for oncology patients during the pandemic. Regarding the continuation of chemotherapy, a study by Ghosh et al. (2020) argued that 203 cancer patients wanted to continue chemotherapy, 40 wanted to postpone it, and 56 what doctors decided. Thus, cancer patients appeared the face a hopeless situation as a result of restrictive measures, transport delays, and lack of therapies.

Purpose: The purpose of the study was to examine the experiences and concerns of cancer patients and to investigate the link between their perception of health and changing treatment plans.

Methodology: The study uses a cross-sectional design. The research involved 99 cancer patients who were recruited with a random sample at the Hemato-Oncology Clinic at the University Clinical Center of Kosovo in Prishtina. The inclusion criteria in the study were patients diagnosed with cancer not less than 6 months ago and capable of communication and literacy. The exclusion criteria were patients diagnosed with cancer no more than 6 months ago and those with serious health conditions. Data were collected from 30 August - 10 September 2021 with a structured questionnaire that was taken from the literature (Lou et al., 2020). The questionnaire consists of three parts: demographic data, personal experiences and concerns of cancer patients about COVID-19, and perceptions about their health. The instrument was first translated and adapted by translators from English to Albanian and then back to English. The reliability of the instrument (Cronbach's alpha) in the current study was 0.79. During data collection, all ethical rules such as voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality of participants were respected.

Results are presented with mean, standard deviation, and percentage. Chi-square analysis was used to show the association of active and inactive treatment groups with the experiences and concerns of cancer patients, and the correlation result to identify the correlation between the health of cancer patients and the change of treatment. The value of $p < 0.05$ was considered statistical significance. Statistical analysis of the data was done with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-26).

Results: The average age of patients was 57.3 ± 3.5 years. Of these, 55.6% were female, while 44.4% were male. The majority of participants (70.7%) had completed high school, 83.8% were married and 76% did not have a job. In terms of health perception, 66% rated their health as deteriorating. While in terms of cancer treatment, 53.5% were inactive treatment (chemotherapy) and 46.5% in active treatment.

Discussion: The results of the study examined the experiences and concerns of cancer patients and revealed statistically significant links between the two treatment groups (active and inactive). The correlation result shows that with increased perceptions of the deteriorating health status of cancer patients their contacts with the oncologist become more frequent to discuss the treatment plan. Cancer patients' perceptions are also positively correlated with the change in the treatment plan and the decision-making role of patients. The results from the literature show that patients are afraid if their therapy is delayed and worry more about cancer progression than about COVID-19 infection (Ghosh, et al., 2020). The results of the study will help experts in developing treatment protocols for cancer patients in situations of eventual pandemics.

Keywords: treatment, patient, pandemic, cancer, etc.

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Biography

Vlora Ejupi is an Assistant Lecture and Medical Faculty at Kolegji AAB who Works with students, Tutored students requiring further assistance with learning concepts and course material and communicated with students helping them in researching in the Nursing field, Conducting academic research in the perspective fields of nursing publishing findings and liaising with follow colleagues from other universities, faculty exchange, research projects. And also Associated faculty members or staff with administrative work, scheduling and classroom and grade student's work according to processes outlined by professors, departments and the university. She relieved the burden on professors by leading classroom or laboratory sessions. Instructed small student groups on individual aspects of the subject matter.

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