

# **Role of Moroccan Nurses working in oncology department on identifying and managing the mental distress of cancer patients.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The incidence and mortality associated with cancer are steadily increasing around the world. In low- and middle-income countries such as Morocco, significant progress has been made in the treatment of cancer. However, the mental health disorders associated with this disease are generally underdiagnosed and underestimated by the health care system. The main objective of this study is to explore the perceptions of nurses within cancer centers regarding the assessment of mental health distress in cancer patients. To achieve this objective, we carried out a quantitative cross-sectional descriptive study among practicing nurses in oncology services (N = 100). A questionnaire was designed for this purpose on the basis of 29 open and closed questions. Thus, the main results of this study indicated, on the one hand, that: The vast majority (95.12%) of nurses confirm the presence of psychological needs in their patients, 82% of participants think that all cancer patients require screening and an assessment of distress as well as 70.7% of these participants considered that this assessment is extremely important and must be taken into account in the treatment trajectory. In addition, the vast majorities (91.5%) of nurses surveyed have not received any training in psycho-oncology, and yet 95.12% state that they encounter patients who suffer from mental disorders, in particular depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, fear of recurrence, body image dissatisfaction and major depression. These disorders have been considered to be the main factors of psychological imbalance in cancer patients, and which are generated especially during the days following the onset of the disease, when diagnosing a recurrence or progression, in phase palliative and before treatment. On the other hand, all oncology nurses reported unsystematic assessment of mental health distress in their cancer patients. Indeed, to identify distress, these participants relied on intuition and subjective judgment and with the direct request to the patient or his family. On the other hand, there are several barriers that hinder this evaluation, including the overload of work, the lack of training in psycho-oncology, the challenges of time and human resources. In addition, the implementation of a screening tool for mental distress in oncology services was recommended with certain criteria by the vast majority of nurses surveyed. Ultimately, a systematic and rapid assessment of symptoms of mental distress is essential to differentiate between normal emotional responses and psycho-pathological disorders, and then referral of the patient to specialist care that can provide evidence-based management evidence psychological management of patients with cancer.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Amina is a 26-year-old Moroccan Phd student. She obtained her research master's degree in advanced health care at the Higher Institute of Health Sciences, Hassan I University, Settat, Morocco. She is continuing her doctoral studies at the same institute. She is responsible for the nursing care center of the simulation center at the Higher Institute of Health Sciences, Hassan I University, Settat, Morocco.

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