

# Experience And Spiritual Meaning Of Cervical Cancer Patients with Chemotherapy

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**Abstract:** In health crises such as the diagnosis of cervical cancer by the chemotherapy, spirituality has a major role in this process, by providing calmness and giving meaning to the disease. A spiritual Muslim provides guidance through concepts and values that provide strategies for overcoming illness and finding meaning in life. Aims: This study aims to describe spiritual meaning, as one of the components of psychological understanding inherent in the lives of cervical cancer patients with chemotherapy. To illustrate the experience and spiritual meaning of 13 Muslim patients diagnosed with cervical cancer who received chemotherapy were interviewed at Dr. Soetomo's hospital, and qualitative data with thematic analysis. One's confidence about the spiritual meaning of his or her disease experience can make people patient, tawakal and also continue to strive for healing. Strategies to provide spiritual care are included in the treatment guidelines and there is a need for cooperation between interdisciplinary health teams, including doctors, and nurses of all team members who provide care

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Cervical cancer is one of the diseases that are feared by women. A woman diagnosed with cervical cancer will experience prolonged stress. Stress caused by cancer itself and the treatment process takes a long time to heal. It has side effects that affect physical condition (Karagozoglu and Kahve, 2013). Women diagnosed with cancer face many challenges ranging from the beginning of the disease, treatment measures including delayed diagnosis, side effects of treatment, financial problems, and are likely to face other consequences such as physical and psychosocial effects (Mattsson *et al.*, 2018). Person who experiences suffering, severe stress or chronic illness, when he has tried his maximum and does not get the optimal results from his efforts, then he will seek comfort and strength from God (Ah.Yusuf *et al.*, 2016). Spiritual need increases when a person has been diagnosed with cancer (Dinkes Kota Surabaya, 2016) (Ghahramanian *et al.*, 2016). Strengthening an individual's spiritual and religious beliefs is also one of the useful nonpharmacological methods for reducing anxiety that has received less attention (Elham *et al.*, 2015)

Death from cervical cancer is also an indicator of health inequality in a country. As many as 86% of cervical cancer deaths are in developing countries including Indonesia (Verma *et al.*, 2017) Ver. According to current estimates by the Indonesian Ministry of Health, the number of women with new cervical cancer ranges from 90-100 cases per 100,000 population, and 40,000 cases of cervical cancer occur each year. Based on the preliminary data, the number of cervical cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy in September as many as 81 patients with cervical cancer incidence from January to September 2017 as many as 682 patients. The prevalence of cancer-related psychological distress was 85% (n= 286) fear of cancer recurrence (n = 175.61%), anxiety (n = 152, 53%), depression (n = 145.51%), fear of death (n = 91.32%), concerns about sexuality (n = 87.34%) and fertility (n = 78.27%), and body image disorders (n = 78.27%) (Mattsson *et al.*, 2018).

Another study conducted by Ferlay *et al.*, also showed that women in developing countries account for about 85% of them of morbidity and mortality worldwide caused by cervical cancer (CI and NE, 2016) Research conducted on 150 cancer patients in Iran showed spiritual needs of

64.3% (Forouzi, 2017) Spirituality has a major role in providing peace of mind to cancer patients, it does not mean that they should be free of cancer but they should be able to lead meaningful lives (Dewi, Peters and Margono, 2013).

Research conducted by Hodge on the spiritual needs of patients, where patients reveal that their spiritual needs are the need for meaning, purpose and hope in life, their relationship with God, spiritual practice, religious obligations, interpersonal relationships and relationships with professional staff (Hodge and Horvath, 2011) Individuals with good spiritual will have better ability to overcome various problems as well as cervical cancer patients with who undergo chemotherapy (Cahyani and Akmal, 2017) A person with good spirituality can increase coping optimism, hope, reduce anxiety, and support feelings of comfort and calm (Azwan, 2015) The spiritual aspect is able to encourage individuals to carry out stronger, greater efforts, and more focus on doing their best when experiencing conditions of emotional stress and illness (Hardianto, 2017). In the context of Islamic society, efforts to avoid stress, anxiety, and depression are through increased religious activities (religious behavior) both through worship practices and in imagining the values contained in worship (Yuliyatun Y, 2014)

Having a strong sense of spirituality helps patients adjust and cope with illness. Spirituality can affect how a patient experiences cancer, finds meaning and peace, and defines health during cancer treatment despite fatigue or pain, and can assist the patient in finding a sense of health in the midst of his or her pain (Puchalski, 2012)

Spirituality serves as a solid foundation for providing value for a Muslim to see his illness (Dewi, Peters and Margono, 2014) and is an important element of patient care in the health examination system, particularly in palliative care. Spirituality has a major role in providing peace to cancer patients, it does not mean that they should be free of cancer but they should be able to live a meaningful life (Dewi, Peters and Margono, 2014) Therefore, the nurse must take into account the spiritual needs of the patient to offer comprehensive care (4) The spiritual needs of cancer patients should be recognized, realized, and considered in patient care by the health team. 15 Nurse's understanding of a patient's spiritual needs can affect a patient's spiritual relationships and care (Hatamip *et al.*, 2015)

## 2. METHOD

The study used qualitative methods with phenomenological approaches to explore the spiritual experiences of women with cervical cancer. Fenomena is based on

a complex and thorough picture, manifested in the form of words, and presented in the form of in-depth information placed in natural situations (Creswell, 2014) With this method can be obtained complete, in-depth, credible, and meaningful data. The type of phenomenology chosen is interpretive phenomenology, the approach that researchers use to focus on interpreting the meaning of other people's experiences, rather than simply explaining those experiences. The data obtained is made a transcript of the data. Data analysis is done using Colaizzi techniques. The data is read repeatedly and the keyword has been identified, then the data is created a category. Researchers next determine sub-themes and potential themes. The theme is validated to the participants and then determined the final theme.

### **Ethical Approval**

This study obtained ethical approval from the Soetomo Hospital Research Ethics Committee (0159/104/VIII/2020)

## 3. RESULT

### **Characteristics of Participants**

Thirteen participants participated in the study. Participants ranged in age from 35 to 64. Education levels was from elementary, junior high, and high school. Nine participants as housewives, one retired civil servant and three participants worked self-employed/food traders and daily necessities, all participants were Muslim. Ten of the 11 participants were still married while three participants were widows. All participants had children between one and five. Eleven participants were from the Javanese tribe, and three from the madura tribe and one banjar tribe. The length of diagnosis is between 6 month to 2 years. Three participants with stage IIA, two stage IIB participants, two stage III A participants and 6 participants with stage IIIB. Participants were admitted to a hospital in Surabaya for improvement of general conditions, and underwent chemotherapy.

### **The value of cervical cancer for sufferers**

Every human being will give a different value to an event. Cervical cancer is assessed by sufferers as a test, punishment, sin-remover, rebuke, and favor.

*"I consider the pain that I am currently experiencing is God's punishment for what I did when I was young who was chasing satisfaction only"... How else has the nurse? all happened anyway" (P4)*

*"It looks like this test I did have to undergo, although I also do not know why I am sick with uterine cancer and only found out after the condition is severe at this time" (P6)*

*"If I get sick like this, I can erase the mistakes and sins that I've done. I'm still trying to heal by being here right now. (P7)*

*"I feel grateful to have been given 55 years of health and now I am still grateful for the pleasure of this cancer pain" (P1)*

*"When many others say this uterine cancer is a severe test to be lived, but for me this is a God's way to makes me the one to be washed away my sins during this time" (P13)*

### **Personal beliefs**

All participants had confidence in every event that occurred in their life cycle such as when experiencing cervical cancer today.

*"...how else nurse? I just live what God is currently giving with this cancer... (P3)*

*"I am sure all this is indeed the will of God with the age of half a century I must accept this disease. . . ." (P7)*

*"Everything that happened is because God has indeed set as destiny for me..." (P13)*

*".....My Life, healthy, death and sick right now because God has arranged it (P9)*

*".... What sins I did also I was given cancer as it is today... (P12)*

### **The ability to give meaning to cervical cancer**

Each people will give a different meaning from the pain felt, take wisdom from the pain, steadfastness and patience and the existence of realistic expectations.

*"... I am convinced that I was given this cancer in order for me to become a better person in the future"... (P8)*

*"..... For the future, I leave it to God only, even yesterday, my next door friend also died despite chemotherapy five times and also did the previous ray treatment"..... (P2)*

*"I believe I can be cured if I take the advice of doctor to seek treatment and do treatment regularly. "(P11)*

### **Religious Practice**

In the sick condition, every Muslim individual needs a relationship with God by doing religious activities that are a vertical relationship in various ways.

*".....I can still follow the studies in the group of mothers in my house as long as I am*

*strong (when no pain and weakness) because it will also make my mind calmer" (P1)*

*'.....I do sholawat and dzikir if I'm out of chemotherapy and the body hurts everything, because honestly nurse, I am afraid that suddenly I die not having any provisions..." (P3)*

*"I always do Pray in five times even though I often feel uncomfortable with the liquid that always comes out of my genitals (P9).*

chemotherapy cause them to be unable to carry out their role in the household both the role of mother, wife, and housekeeper cannot be done optimally.

*....." During my illness I was never in a relationship with my husband, because I was afraid of bleeding again like the beginning and the husband also did not want to do it. I once said that I allowed my husband to remarry but the husband answered with a smile..." (P5).*

*"All the housework since I was done by my husband and children started to cook, clean clean house, because physically I was also not strong enough to do all that anymore... (P12)*

*"Since I found out I was sick with uterine cancer, I prayed tahajut, hajat and dhuha even though I could not routinely every day for the sunnah prayer". (P12)*

*"I always do Dzikir, istiqfar and read the letter yasin in morning and evening, to ask for healing from this pain." (P5)*

### **Hope for Life**

Life expectancy is one of the spiritual domains of an individual's understanding of life. Therefore, hope is the basis of the spiritual aspect. Almost all of the participants expressed their expectations by expressing:

*" ..... I want to stay alive and well again, reunited with my children and family."*

*"With this treatment it's part of the effort to get me given age and healthy again"*

Various hormonal and psychosocial changes experienced by women with cervical cancer who undergo always thinking positively (husnudzon) that the disease suffered is a process of life that must be lived (Yuliyatun Y, 2014) These attitudes and behaviors include variables for faith that include belief in God, peace in spiritual and religious beliefs, belief in the power of Allah, the received power of belief, and believing in God (O'Brien, 2007)

In giving the meaning of the disease that a person is experiencing can make patience, there is a wisdom that can be taken from his illness, but also arises unrealistic expectations of chemotherapy treatment. Meaning and acceptance can reduce the negative impact of increased fatigue during the first year after

the start of treatment (Visser *et al.*, 2020) humans. In giving meaning each individual is different and can change at any time (Saarelainen, 2017)

In carrying out religious practices and getting closer to Allah is done by praying, praying, giving alms. Prayer is a spiritual therapy that is often done by people with cancer (Taylor, 2005) In research conducted by Wells (Wells *et al.*, 2007) revealed that prayer is one of six complementary therapies chosen by cervical cancer sufferers. The solemn and sincere prayer of sunah tahajud provides psychological benefits in the form of feelings of calm and peace, and can provide great benefits to physical health so that it affects the psychology of individual health (Chodijah, 2013)

Life expectancy is one of the spiritual domains of an individual's understanding of life. All participants in the study had the same hope of recovering from the disease. The existence of optimism makes internal motivation to improve the quality of life. Hope can help the individual to face his illness and live his life with the disease he suffered through his life with determination (Erfina, Afyanti and Rachmawati, 2010)

Physiological and psycho-social changes as side effects of cervical cancer chemotherapy change a woman's role as both mother and wife for her partner. Participants said there was a fear of bleeding and physical darkness that was felt to become a reason to not having sexual intercourse and also inability to carry out homework, the suggestion of polygamy in conveyed by respondents in helping the fulfillment of sexuality of couples. Perceived role-playing problem as a problem that threatens women's identity as well as loss of sexuality function (Susanti, Hamid and Afyanti, 2011)

## 5. Conclusions.

This study describes the experience since women diagnosed with cervical cancer assess the disease and make spiritual beliefs and practices a way to get help in hopes of recovery. There are unrealistic expectations, wisdom in undergoing pain, patience and tawakal as behavior that occurs. Changes in the role and function of mother and wife as a result of physical and psychosocial changes that occur. Strategies for providing spiritual care are included in the care guidelines and cooperation is required between interdisciplinary health teams, including doctors, and nurses of all team members who provide care.

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