

Socioeconomic Burden of a Diagnosis of Cervical Cancer in Women in Rural Uganda: Findings from a Phenomenological Study

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Abstract : Objective: The aim of the study was to diagnose the socio-economic burden and impact of a diagnosis of cervical cancer (CC) in rural women in the context of low-resourced country Uganda, using a phenomenological enquiry. Methods: This was a multi-site phenomenological inquiry, conducted at three hospice settings; Mobile Hospice Mbarara in southwestern, Little Hospice Hoima in Western, and Hospice Africa Uganda Kampala in central Uganda. A purposive sample of women with a histologically confirmed diagnosis of CC was recruited. Data was collected using open-ended audio-recorded interviews conducted in the native languages of participants. Interviews were transcribed verbatim in English, and Braun and Clarke's (2019) framework of thematic analysis was used. Results: 13 women with a mean age of 49.2 and age range 29-71 participated in the study. All participants were of low socioeconomic status. The majority (84.6%) had advanced disease at diagnosis. A fuller reading of transcripts produced four major themes clustered under; (1) socioeconomic characteristics of women, (2) impact of CC on women's relationships, (3) disrupted and impaired activities of daily living (ADLs), and (4) economic disruptions. Conclusions: A diagnosis of CC introduces significant socio-economic disruptions in a woman's and her family's life. CC causes disability, impairs the woman and her family's productivity hence exacerbating levels of poverty in the home. High and expensive out-of-pocket expenditure on treatment, investigations, and transport costs further compound the socio-economic burden. Decentralizing cancer care services to regional centers, scaling up screening services, subsidizing costs of cancer care services, or making cervical cancer care treatment free of charge, strengthening monitoring mechanisms in public facilities to curb the vice of healthcare workers soliciting bribes from patients, increased mass awareness campaigns about cancer, training more healthcare professionals in cancer investigation and management, and palliative care, and introducing an introductory course on gynecologic cancers into all health training institutions are recommended.

Keywords : activities of daily living, cervical cancer, out-of-pocket, expenditure, phenomenology, socioeconomic

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