

Illness Representations of Injury: A Comparison of Patients and Their Primary Caregivers

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Abstract : Background: Illness perceptions are developed when people face health-threatening situations. Previous research suggests that understanding discrepancies between illness perceptions of patients and caregivers may need to improve quality of health care. Objective: This study examined the differences between illness perceptions of injured patients and those of their caregivers. Methods: Comparative study design was used. The study setting was the surgical wards of a teaching hospital in Taiwan. Participants were 127 pairs of injured patients and their caregivers. The participants completed socio-demographic data and completed the Chinese Illness Perception Questionnaire Revised-Trauma, which comprises eight subscales. Clinical data of the injured patients was obtained from medical records. Results: This study found that injured patients were more pessimistic than their caregivers about the injury. There were significant differences between patients and caregivers insofar as patients perceived more physical symptoms, scored higher in terms of reasons for their injury, had more negative emotions and experienced more consequences than caregivers. Elderly caregivers and caregivers for patients who were over 65, severely injured and admitted to an ICU perceived more negative perceptions about the injury. Conclusions: This study indicated that patients and caregivers had negative illness representations several months after injury although the intensity of their perceptions was different. The interventions should highlight the need to assist patients and caregivers after injury.

Keywords : illness representations, injury, caregivers, comparative study

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