

Sociocultural Context of Pain Management in Oncology and Palliative Nursing Care

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Abstract : Pain management is a question of quality of life and an indicator for nursing quality. Chronic pain which is predominant in oncology and palliative nursing situations is perceived today as a multifactorial, individual emotional experience with specific characteristics including the sociocultural dimension when dealing with migrant patients. This dimension of chronic pain is of major importance in professional nursing of migrant patients in hospices or palliative care units. Objectives of the study are: 1. To find out more about the sociocultural views on pain and nursing care, on customs and nursing practices connected with pain of both Turkish Muslim and German Christian women, 2. To improve individual and family oriented nursing practice with view to sociocultural needs of patients in severe pain in palliative care. In a qualitative-explorative comparative study 4 groups of women, Turkish Muslims immigrants (4 from the first generation, 5 from the second generation) and German Christian women of two generations (5 of each age group) of the same age groups as the Turkish women and with similar educational backgrounds were interviewed (semistructured ethnographic interviews using Spradley, 1979) on their perceptions and experiences of pain and nursing care within their families. For both target groups the presentation will demonstrate the following results in detail: Utterance of pain as well as "private" and "public" pain vary within different societies and cultures. Permitted forms of pain utterance are learned in childhood and determine attitudes and expectations in adulthood. Language, especially when metaphors and symbols are used, plays a major role for misunderstandings. The sociocultural context of illness may include specific beliefs that are important to the patients and yet seem more than far-fetched from a biomedical perspective. Pain can be an influential factor in family relationships where respect or hierarchies do not allow the direct utterance of individual needs. Specific resources are often, although not exclusively, linked to religious convictions and are significantly helpful in reducing pain. The discussion will evaluate the results of the study with view to the relevant literature and present nursing interventions and instruments beyond medication that are helpful when dealing with patients from various socio-cultural backgrounds in painful end-of-life situations.

Keywords : pain management, migrants, sociocultural context, palliative care

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