

Influence of Spirituality on Health Outcomes and General Well-Being in Patients with End-Stage Renal Disease

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Abstract : End-stage renal disease (ESRD) introduces physical, psychological, social, emotional and spiritual challenges into patients' lives. Spirituality has been found to contribute to improved health outcomes, mainly in the areas of quality of life (QOL) and well-being. No studies exist to explore the influence of spirituality on the health outcomes and general well-being in patients with end-stage renal disease receiving hemodialysis (HD) treatment in Scotland. This study was conducted to explore spirituality in the daily lives of among these patients and how it may influence their QOL and general well-being. The study employed a qualitative method. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with a sample of 21 patients. A thematic approach using Framework Analysis informed the qualitative data analysis. Participants were recruited from 11 dialysis units across four Health Boards in Scotland. The participants were regular patients attending the dialysis units three times per week. Four main themes emerged from the qualitative interviews: 'Emotional and Psychological Turmoil', 'Life is Restricted', 'Spirituality' and 'Other Coping Strategies'. The findings suggest that patients' QOL might be affected because of the physical challenges such as unremitting fatigue, disease unpredictability and being tied down to a dialysis machine, or the emotional and psychological challenges imposed by the disease into their lives such as wholesale changes, dialysis as a forced choice and having a sense of indebtedness. The findings also revealed that spirituality was an important coping strategy for the majority of participants who took part in the qualitative component (n=16). Different meanings of spirituality were identified including connection with God or Supernatural Being, connection with the self, others and nature/environment. Spirituality encouraged participants to accept their disease and offered them a sense of protection, instilled hope in them and helped them to maintain a positive attitude to carry on with their daily lives, which may have had a positive influence on their health outcomes and general well-being. The findings also revealed that humor was another coping strategy that helped to diffuse stress and anxiety for some participants and encouraged them to carry on with their lives. The findings from this study provide a significant contribution to a very limited body of work. The study contributes to our understanding of spirituality and how people receiving dialysis treatment use it to manage their daily lives. Spirituality is of particular interest due to its connection with health outcomes in patients with chronic illnesses. The link between spirituality and many chronic illnesses has gained some recognition, yet the identification of its influence on the health outcomes and well-being in patients with ESRD is still evolving. There is a need to understand patients' experiences and examine the factors that influence their QOL and well-being to ensure that the services available are adequately tailored to them. Hence, further research is required to obtain a better understanding of the influence of spirituality on the health outcomes and general well-being of patients with ESRD.

Keywords : end-stage renal disease, general well-being, quality of life, spirituality

Conference Title : ICSRD 2020 : International Conference on Scientific Research and Development

Conference Location : Chicago, United States

Conference Dates : December 12-13, 2020