

Cancer and Disability: A Psychosocial Approach in Puerto Rican Women as Cancer Survivors

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Abstract : Cancer is one of the first cause of death in the world, most of them are women. In Puerto Rico, there is a permanent controversy on the conceptuation of what really involves a disability, also in when a chronic illness, like cancer, should be considered a disability. The aim of the research was to identify functional limitation in 50 women survivors of cancer. In turn, to know the meanings that 6 women attributed to cancer with a focus on functionality. We conducted a mix method research based on surveys and narratives. We administered the World Health Organization Disability Assessment, version 2.0, which obtained a Cronbach's alpha of .949 on the general scale, and from .773 to .956 on the six domains. The domain that obtained the highest average was social participation (M= 33.89, SD= 20.434), but it was not significant in the disability percentage. Also, there was no significance in the disability percentage in the other five domains. In a matter of meanings, we conduct a semistructured interview to 6 participants. All of them do not refer to cancer as a disability, either they do not know that in Puerto Rico cancer is considered as a disability by the law. However, participants agree that cancer at the time of treatment and subsequent to it, has significant effects on functional limitations (fatigue, pain, cognitive limitations, and weakness, among others. Psychooncologic practice should encourage the constant assessment of the functionality to identify the needs that emerge from oncological diagnosis. So that psychosocial intervention could be considered as critical in cancer treatment to promote a better quality of life and well-being in a person with cancer.

Keywords : cancer, Puerto Rico, disability, psychosocial approach

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