

A Systematic Review on Communication and Relations between Health Care Professionals and Patients with Cancer in Outpatient Settings Matter

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Abstract : Background: The development in cancer care has shifted towards shorter hospital stays and more outpatient treatment. Today, cancer care and treatment predominantly takes place in outpatient settings where encounters between patients and health care professionals are often brief. This development will probably continue internationally as the global cancer burden seems to be growing significantly. Furthermore, the number of patients who require ambulatory treatments such as chemotherapy is increasing. Focusing on the encounters between health care professionals and patients during oncology treatment has thus become increasingly important due to a growing trend in outpatient cancer management. Objective: The aim of the systematic review was to summarize the literature from the perspective of the patient, on experiences of and the need for communication and relationships with the health care professional during chemotherapy treatment in an outpatient setting. Method: The review was designed and carried out according to the PRISMA guidelines and PICO framework. The systematic search was conducted in Medline, CINAHL, The Cochrane Library and Joanna Briggs Institute Evidence Based Practice Database. Results: In all, 1174 studies were identified by literature search. After duplicates were removed, the remaining studies (n = 1053) were screened for inclusion. Nine studies were included; qualitative (n = 5) and quantitative (n = 4) as they met the inclusions criteria. The review identified that communication and relationships between health care professionals and patients were important for the patients' ability to cope with cancer and also had an impact on patients' satisfaction with care in the outpatient clinic. Furthermore, the review showed that hope and positivity was a need and strategy for patients with cancer and was facilitated by health care professionals. Finally, it revealed that outpatient clinic visits framed and influenced communication and relationships. Conclusions: This review identified the significance of communication and the relationships between patients and health care professionals in the outpatient setting as it supports patients' ability to cope with cancer. The review showed the need for health care professionals to pay attention to the relational aspects of communication in an outpatient clinic as encounters are often brief. Furthermore, the review helps to specify which elements of the communication are central in the patient-health care professional interaction from the patients' perspective. Finally, it shows a need for more research to investigate which type of interaction and intervention would be the most effective in supporting patients' coping during chemotherapy in an outpatient clinic.

Keywords : ambulatory chemotherapy, communication, health care professional-patient relation, nurse-patient relation, outpatient care, systematic review

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