STIGMA PERCEPTION AMONG WOMEN WITH OVARIAN CANCER: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

Stigma has been described as a sign of disgrace which distinguishes the person from others. The other definition of stigma express that a combination of perceived dangerousness and social distance. Stigma within society can come in many different forms, but usually through attitudes, stereotyping or labelling. The importance of recognizing and exploring cancer related stigma is gaining attention.

OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was to explore the perceived stigma of women with ovarian cancer.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Type of research is descriptive and qualitative

research was conducted at a private university hospital in Ankara, Turkey.

A purposeful sampling was applied until data saturation was reached and 16 women with ovarian cancer included.

Data Collect Tool

Data Form

Age, education, marital status, stage, duration of cancer diagnosis & treatment..

Interviews were conducted by two researchers. Each interview lasted about 20–40 min, was audio-taped, transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically.

The transcripts were coded line-by-line for meaning of the sentences during analyses.

Semi-structured interview questions

What does it mean to you to be diagnosed with gynecological cancer?

How has your disease affected your life?

Have you been stigmatized about your disease?, How it affected you?

How the diagnosis and treatment affected family processes?

How has your illness affected your social life and your close relationship?

RESULTS

Participants were aged 46-80 years, mean duration of diagnosis was 3 years (range 1-12). Five themes emerged from data:

Themes	Sub-Themes	Examples of illustrative quotes
Fear	Dependence on others	'I have two sister with breast cancer, one brother has brain cancer, I always refused to carry the genes of this family I would say I would refuse, I was afraid of being cancer, my brain does not accept....'
	Pain / suffering	
	Fear of death	
	Metastasis / progression of the disease'	
Sadness/ inability to speak feelings	Being sad & worrying about disease	'When I first diagnosed, my husband did not shave for a long time, he cried constantly, did not sleep until the morning.. now he does not seem to me, not caring about me, not talking about the disease at all, I can not say anything but my daughter says that 'my father are crying a lot when you are not there'..... '
	Feeling sorry to upset her spouse and children	
	Being a burden on family	
	Inability to share emotions in family	
Influence of life	Unable to do things due to fatigue	'I don't see much of my friends because they're making me upset. Some of my friends saying to think of cancer like a flu and don't worry. Its not that simple !. They are mentioning as if they had cancer. Some of my friends say it's a deadly disease and these make me sad..'
	Protective approaches at home	
	Inability to meet with friends	
	Lack of desire to do anything because of having cancer	
Guilt	Being late in diagnosis	'I had delayed, I wish I went to the doctor earlier.. I had no appetite, there was pain in my groin...'
	Not paying attention to their health	
Struggle	Being faithful	'My aunt had just died of uterine cancer. I was very sorry when I found out I had cancer. But then I said that it will pass anyway, my faith is very strong I will overcome this disease... ..'
	Relying on doctor	
	Believing to be cured	

CONCLUSIONS

The expressions of fear of death related to the disease and their unwillingness to receive social support suggest that internal stigma exists in these patients. Further studies on this issue, planning interventions to increase awareness on cancer stigma and prevention of social isolation are needed.

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