Living life in the face of loss: parenteral nutrition in ovarian cancer patients in bowel obstruction

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Rationale

- **Malignant bowel obstruction (MBO)** is a complication of advanced ovarian cancer and is often inoperable
- These patients may receive home parenteral nutrition (PN)
- This research investigated:
 - The experiences of women and their family caregivers of home PN
 - Patient nutritional status and survival

Methods

- A mixed methods study involving 38 women with ovarian cancer and inoperable bowel obstruction admitted to tertiary cancer centre between October 2016 and December 2017.
- Patient characteristics and survival data were collected from medical records. Body composition was measured using computed tomography scans.¹
- 92 longitudinal in-depth interviews with 20 women, 13 relatives and healthcare professionals.
- Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically influenced by the techniques of Van Manen² using NVivo 10.
- Data were read and re-read themes and subthemes were created inductively from the data.
- Anonymous quotations have been used to illustrate each theme and give an overview of the data.

Results

CONSORT DIAGRAM

Survival of patients receiving HPN vs no HPN

Patient characteristics

Mean age N = 38	67 years (SD7.5)
Histology N = 38	
Serous	31
Endometrial	1
Clear cell	2
Adenocarcinoma NOS	2
Carcinosarcoma	1
Mucinous	1
Degree of MBO N = 38	
Multilevel obstruction	34
Single obstruction	3
Missing data	1
Lines of chemotherapy following MBO N= 38	
No chemotherapy	14
1 line chemotherapy	19
2 lines chemotherapy	5
Mean fat mass n= 33	21 kg (SD 5.86)
Mean muscle mass n = 33	31 kg (SD 2.88)

Patient outcomes

Median survival from MBO n = 38	70 days (range 8 – 506)
Median time on home PN n =17	91 days (range 6 – 441)

Losses

- **Curtailment of activities of daily living**
 - “I can’t stand anybody eating...in front of me. It is a real problem.”
- **Limiting bodily freedom**
 - “All the wires get tangled”
- **Imposed routine**
 - “They come too early in the afternoon”
- **Impact on family caregivers**
 - “I am physically falling to bits”

Gains

- **Survival**
 - “If I wasn’t on this, I wouldn’t be here.”
 - “This is important, this is my lifeline”
- **Quality of life**
 - Improved as patients could be fed at home
 - “It’s nice to have your own things around you.”

Discussion

- Patients and families saw PN as a life line and were grateful for it.
- However, this benefit came with losses.
- Healthcare professionals need to be realistic about these.
- Nevertheless, patients will suffer losses to continue living.

References

- 1.Mourtzakis M et al: A practical and precise approach to quantification of body composition in cancer patients using computed tomography images acquired during routine care. *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism* 2008, 33(5):997-1006.
- 2.Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Ont: Althouse Press.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the patients and family caregivers who gave generously of their time. We are grateful for Marie Curie for funding this study.