The process of mastering symptoms related to colorectal cancer: A meta-ethnography approach

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INTRODUCTION

Individuals with colorectal cancer (CRC) often have a long treatment pathway but current guidance on supportive care respectively on the process, which is influenced by many symptoms, is generic.

METHODS

Seventeen relevant papers from six electronic databases were identified and synthesized using seven stages following Noblit and Hare (1988).

OBJECTIVES

The goal of this meta-ethnography was to depict the process of individuals' mastery of symptoms related to CRC and its treatment, to develop a better understanding of individuals' symptom experiences.

RESULTS

Through the translation of key themes, an iterative process of an individual's behavior to reach mastering over CRC was identified as a constant key concept within the larger context of symptom experience over the illness trajectory. This process contains (1) balancing, as a reaction first and foremost to situations, for '*making sense*' or to '*share*'; (2) mastering, to achieve emotional and physical control especially '*with controlling ones' body*'; and (3) normalizing as a successful or adequate adaption to new situations particularly '*with reforming life*'.

CONCLUSIONS

This meta-ethnography highlights fundamental facets of how individuals strive to achieve mastery during the treatment trajectory. Based on that, individuals can be supported in their situational balancing strategy in case new or recurrent symptoms occur. Over time, they can be strengthened in mastering strategies, e.g. in terms of achieving a controllable body, or in normalizing and regaining control, by e.g. finding a path. These findings could also be considered in research to form support types, so information can be tailored to the individuals' needs.