Colorectal cancer patients’ symptom and illness experience throughout the treatment trajectory - A meta-synthesis

Christiane Hildebrandt, Antje Koller, Hanna Mayer | Department of Nursing Science, University of Vienna

INTRODUCTION

During illness trajectory, patients with colorectal cancer (CRC) experience a multitude of symptoms, which are physical and beyond that, with far-reaching impact on their lives. Until to date, a holistic overview of CRC patients’ symptom experiences and the impact on their lives during this illness trajectory remain ill-defined.

METHODS

A systematic search of six electronic databases was undertaken. A meta-ethnography approach with seven stages, developed by Noblit and Hare [1], was conducted. Themes across studies were closely related to one another. Hence, a ‘reciprocal translation’ of themes from one study into another was applied.

RESULTS

Seventeen studies met the inclusion criteria. Reciprocal translation revealed overarching key constructs which were synthesized in a holistic model. An iterative process of achieving mastery over CRC is oscillating permanently between disruptions and mastery alongside the entire treatment trajectory. Disruptions are depicted longitudinally by ‘*Disruption in life through cancer*’ and ‘*Experiences of symptoms & challenges by cancer*’ and mastery is achieved by experiences such as ‘*Making sense of the experience*’ or ‘*Sharing the experiences*’.

CONCLUSIONS

For researchers and clinicians this meta-ethnography can provide a comprehensive overview of CRC patients’ symptom experiences. The model may be helpful to guide educational activities, consultations about important treatment decisions, or timing symptom assessment within the context of CRC patients’ lives.

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