



PERSPECTIVES OF FAMILY MEMBERS OF PEOPLE WITH CANCER TOWARDS PALLIATIVE CARE

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ABSTRACT

Cancer is one of the global health problems. It is a leading cause of death in many developed countries and the second leading cause of death in developing countries. Palliative care helps to increase cancer survival rates and reduce suffering of cancer patients. The majority of patients with cancer are diagnosed with advanced-stage disease, and the best treatment options are pain relief and palliative care. It focuses on not only patient care but his/her family also. Family members have a pivotal role in palliative care. The aim of this study was to describe family perspectives of palliative care of patients with cancer. In this descriptive cross-sectional study, a convenience sample of 300 family members of people with cancer in Apeksha hospital, Maharagama, Sri Lanka, participated. Structured interviews were conducted using a questionnaire. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel. The questionnaire included both open-ended and close-ended questions including three parts. The ethical approval was obtained from the ethical review committee, International Institute of Health Sciences, Welisara, Sri Lanka. Among the sample, the majority was Sinhalese (61.7%) and was in the age group of 41-49 (35%). Only 34.7% of family members have heard the term "palliative care" and 15.3% of them were stated different meanings to the term such as providing pain relief (5.7%), improving quality of life (3.3%) and providing comfort to the patient (4.3%). The majority of participants (76.6%) were satisfied with the nursing care the patients were received. Among the sample 61.3% of family members were happy regarding the facilities in the unit or ward. 16.3% family members strongly agreed that there were adequate medical staff and nursing staff in the unit according to their experience. About 37.3% of participants did not agree for the easily accessible palliative care service in Sri Lanka. The most preferred area to be at the end of life was home (65.7%) and the 82.7% of participants strongly agreed with public enhancing programs on palliative care and easily accessible service facility. The study shows that family members have positive and negative experiences with less understanding of palliative care service. It is important to enhance knowledge and understanding of palliative care through conducting palliative care programs in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Family members, palliative care, perception, cancer