



## The Significance of Disease Perception in Cancer and Nursing

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### Abstract

Cancer causes premature death if not diagnosed and treated early. One of the most important factors in coping with cancer is the illness perception. Illness perception plays an important role in the resolution or complication of many intertwined problems in cancer. It should be known that individuals with a positive sense of illness are more effective in combating disease. Nurses who care for cancer patients need to understand how they perceive patients' illnesses, if they can change their false beliefs, and to help them acquire a more appropriate lifestyle and habits for their illness. Nursing interventions should be planned and implemented in order to improve the symptoms that the patients perceive, to inform the patient about the disease process and to change the present negative illness perception.

**Keywords:** Cancer; Illness; Perception; Nursing

**Abbreviations:** DNA: Deoxy Ribonucleic Acid

### Background

Cancer is an increasingly fatal public health problem all over the world [1]. One of the most important factors in coping with cancer is the illness perception. It should be known that individuals with a positive illness sense are more effective in combating disease [2]. Nurses form the largest part of the health care team. In this respect, it is very important to evaluate the illness perceptions of cancer patients [3].

### Introduction

Cancer, a change in spell out first DNA, is a disease that occurs when the endogenous cells multiply in an uncontrolled way [1]. Cancer causes premature death if not diagnosed and treated early [4]. The disease accounts for 25% of deaths in developed countries [5]. Illness perception is a different

process in each individual [6]. Patients try to understand their illness according to their personal experience, knowledge, values, beliefs and needs [7]. According to the illness-susceptibility model, individuals respond to any disease and respond first to their physical and psychosocial consequences. These responses are a reflection of the beliefs and emotional reactions of the disease [2]. The disease must be assessed by health professionals.

### Illness Perception of Cancer

Illness perception is defined by the individual's interpretation of the disease or its symptoms. Illness perception is a theory of the self-monitoring model that addresses the effects of the adaptation process on the disease. According to this model, individuals respond to any illness firstly to cope with the physical and psychosocial consequences of the illness. These responses are a reflection of the beliefs and emotional reactions of the illness. According to the self-supervision model, the

concept of illness perception consists of five organizational dimensions. These dimensions; beliefs and illness related to the disease, which are shaped by the duration, outcome, and curability of the disease [2]. Cancer is a cause of multidimensional changes in the lives of individuals. The aggressive treatment of cancer may be perceived as a panic and anxious process involving uncertainties, evoking pain and suffering in death [8]. In a study conducted with cancer patients; cancer was viewed with feelings of helplessness and fear [9]. Patients diagnosed with cancer may be beginning to experience one of the most shocking changes in their lives from the moment they are diagnosed [10]. Disease can lead to situations ranging from simple distress to loss-mourning [11].

In cancer, recognizing what the patient understands from the illness, beliefs about illness, fears, and how an individual reacts to the illness is necessary in order to provide treatment compliance. The following variables influence the emotional and behavioral response of the patient to cancer:

- i. Variables related to the disease; duration of disease, progression, course, affected organ, type of surgical intervention, other treatments applied.
- ii. Patient related variables; age, gender, occupation, personality traits, previous illness experiences, ways of coping with stress, and how they perceive the illness.
- iii. Environmental variables; family interrelationships of the patient, the presence of social support, the illness perception of society, value judgments [12].

Illness perceptions of patients with cancer and prospective studies, is between 3 and 24 months according to psychological effect and quality of life [11-14]. Patients who develop negative insights and attitudes towards their illness may be worse and healing is delayed; potentially affecting one's self-esteem and self-efficacy. Thus, the motivation of patients for treatment may diminish [10]. As the negative perceptions of cancer diminish in cancer studies, the negative beliefs about the duration of the illness decrease; treatment control is increasing [15]. A disease-related disorder of cancer patients is a condition associated with understanding. In a study conducted, it was found that the positive illness perception developed as the satisfaction of the patients increased with their illness [16]. People who have a cancer diagnosis should be able to manage themselves, cope with the emotional state of the illness, and be able to cope with the daily stress accompanying the illness by changing the

perceptions that they have about their illnesses positively [17].

### Illness Perception in Cancer and Nursing

Illness perception plays an important role in the resolution or complication of many intertwined problems in cancer. Nurses who care for cancer patients need to understand how they perceive patients' illnesses, if they change their false beliefs, and to help them acquire a more appropriate lifestyle and habits for their illness [3]. Nursing interventions should be planned and implemented to improve the symptoms that the patients perceive, to inform the patient about the illness process and to change the current negative illness perception. In order to better understand, control and treat the disorders that can occur and occur in a patient group such as cancer, the nurses who give care to cancer patients should be aware of the illnesses of the patients, inform the illnesses every step of the way to improve the illness perception, service, holistic and humanistic perspective [8].

### Conclusion

Cancer is a cause of multidimensional changes in the lives of individuals. When caring for patients with cancer, it is necessary to understand what the patient understands from the illness, beliefs about illness, fears, and reaction to the illness. These affect the ability to adjust to treatment. Nurses form the largest part of the health care team. In this respect, the evaluation of illness perceptions of cancer patients is very important as a nursing responsibility.

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