

Quality of life and survivorship (cancer)



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Survivorship Issues in Ovarian Cancer Throughout the past decades the level of medicine was boosted, thus the survival rates for women, suffering from ovarian cancer have increased from 37% in 1976 to an estimated 45% in 2006. Nevertheless, there still are problems those patients experience, both physiological and psychological ones. In general, the quantity of research devoted to the quality of life of patients who suffered or suffer from ovarian cancer is insufficient, and they don't cover all the problems that those patients have to deal with.

The specialists prove that the ovarian cancer survivors have to deal with various difficulties. They say that those women have physiological, psychological, emotional, social and sexual problems. Physiological problems are the most widespread among the ovarian cancer survivors. The researches show that most of women who live with this disease suffer from fatigue, nausea and anorexia. They also suffer from abdominal pain, gastrointestinal side effects, electrolyte imbalance and bladder dysfunctions, which are often the results of the therapy they receive. The specialists also define lower body lymphedema as one of the widespread treatment side effects. One of the studies show that 28% of women who received ovarian cancer treatment reported swelling in the legs. Other treatment side effects are peripheral neuropathy, bone marrow depression, etc. Nevertheless, most of the patients confess that fatigue is the most unpleasant symptom that worsens their quality of life.

Doctors use different medications to treat the symptoms of cancer, and the side effects from treatment, which sometimes worsens the patients' condition. Fatigue, the most unpleasant symptom is overcome only by sleeping or rest.

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In the same time most of the ovarian cancer survivors suffer from various psychological problems, as this diagnosis disrupts the daily lives of the patients. Women lose the ability to work, and thus their financial independency. Moreover, they lose certainty in their future. It is mostly that ovarian cancer is diagnosed at the late stages, thus the risk of fatal outcome is high for this category of patients, which also leads to psychological sufferings. The researchers also note that the fear of recurrence is one of the most influential negative factors for the psychological condition of the cancer patients.

The researches show that the ovarian cancer often results in significant levels of depression and anxiety, emotional distress, and behavioral disruptions. As a result of the illness and its treatment, the self-perception of most of the patients changes, which also causes distress. Treatment-related menopause and infertility lead to depressions and other negative emotional and psychological conditions.

To help patients cope with those problems health care providers have to be very attentive to the patients' needs and questions. 34% of ovarian cancer survivors reported they didn't get any written information about their condition and methods of treatment, while 31% reported only few of their questions were answered. The task of the healthcare provider is to give the patients all the information they need, to answer all of their questions concerning their condition and treatment, and provide psychological help and support.

Most of the women who live with ovarian cancer face the problems in sexual sphere. Because of their condition they feel themselves unattractive. In addition the side effects of the treatment that often occur are vaginal

dryness, and the descent in libido. In addition to the abdominal pains those women often experience, it makes sexual life unpleasant and undesirable for many of the patients. Actually, the problems in this sphere need more psychological treatment than medicinal one.

There is still too little nursing information about the cancer survivors' treatment. Nurses are the ones who are able to provide the most help to the cancer victims, thus they have to be aware of all the symptoms connected with this disease, and the methods of treatment used.

References

1. Lockwood-Rayermann, S. (2006). Survivorship Issues in Ovarian Cancer: A Review. *Oncology Nursing Forum*. Vol. 33, num. 3