



Suffering, Love, and Spirituality: The Manifestation of Relationships during Illness of Latin- American advanced cancer patients (LAdCa)

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Introduction

- Among patients with a life-threatening illness committed to living a “spiritual” life, presence of spiritual pain(SP) can be textured. Spirituality is a resource to cultivate hope, faith, acceptance and healing relationships. Limited research has showed the relationships of suffering, love, and spirituality in this population.

Methods

- We interviewed 325 LAdCa at a Palliative Care clinic in Chile, Guatemala, and the United States.
- Five open-ended questions were asked about spirituality, SP, and meaning. We employed a traditional, inductive qualitative narrative. Key-concepts and patterns emerged from individual accounts and examined as part of a collective-narrative. Recurring themes and frequency of language, were referenced for majority-based reporting. An interpretive phenomenological analysis was engaged within psycho-social and psycho-spiritual frameworks, allowing the unfolding of shared story and meaning.

Results



- Most of LAdCa described spirituality as an essential or guiding force in their daily life, and it was largely expressed as a feeling. For many, this manifests as a convergence of inner life informed by a spiritual or religious framework.
- Most participants linked spirituality to God/divinity, while meaning was almost always derived from connections, relationships (family). Family was the deepest source of love, mirroring, and accompaniment.



At the same time, the majority of LAdCa reported profound SP during the height of their illness.

Their SP stemmed largely from feelings of: 1)Profound loss(of loved ones, hope, love-itself); 2)Acute aloneness(“emptiness”); and 3)Unworthiness. It was often described with language-specific to the body: an aching-heart, chest, or soul.

Conclusion



- Spirituality was reported as fundamental in the life of LAdCa. Search for internal peace through relationship with self, others, and God might be a protection/buffering of the SP/suffering.
- More research is needed to better characterize the meaning and effective interventions for spiritual pain.