

AN ANALYSIS OF THE SUPPORT AND QUALITY OF LIVE AFTER THE DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF PROSTATE CANCER IN THE RADIOTHERAPY SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Prostate cancer is the second most common cancer among men in most parts of the world. According to the National Cancer Institute (INCA), in Brazil there is an average of 61,000 new cases registered annually, while in the United States of America (USA) there was an average of 200,000 new cases. The advancement of technology and science has enabled a higher rate of cancer survival, especially when diagnosed early. Radiotherapy and radical prostatectomy have been shown to be effective in both controlling and curing prostate cancer; however, the patient's satisfaction index, during the control period of the disease, in relation to the health team must be known. In the present work, patients being submitted to radiotherapy in a public hospital were asked to respond questions about the degree of satisfaction of support being receiving. Part of the research data obtained through questionnaire indicated that 65% of the patients ignore or know very little about the disease and 100% reported interest in having more information about prostate cancer. It was questioned whether during or after treatment there was need for support from health professionals, such as: physician, nursing, psychologist, social worker and physiotherapist, more than 60% reported having need of one or more specialist. The complete results of this survey will be used to elaborate guidance to radiotherapy units, through collecting data from the medical records and questionnaires relative to physical, social, psychological and emotional support, after the period of treatment with radiotherapy for prostate cancer.

1. INTRODUCTION

Prostate cancer is the most common chronic disease among men worldwide [1]. According to the National Cancer Institute (INCA), in Brazil, this type of malignancy loses only to skin cancer and approximately 61,200 new cases are registered annually [2], the classification of prostate cancer in the United States of America is not different and there is an average of 1 new diagnosis for each 6 men annually, being more than 200,000 diagnosed with the disease and approximately 30,000 will die [3].

In most cases, death is not the main fear on the part of these patients, but the several social, financial and psychological obstacles that they will face from then on [4]. One of the major concerns after the diagnosis of prostate cancer seems to be abandonment. Studies show that environmental factors such as family interaction, friendship, social and religious support may directly interfere with the effect of the treatment of these patients [5].

The objective of this pioneering work in Brazil is to identify the quality of life of patients during the treatment of prostate cancer in the radiotherapy sector of the Hospital das Clínicas de São Paulo (HCFMUSP) and analyzing these data with the information from other authors. To this purpose, a survey was conducted collecting data through questionnaires to identify the level of provided-patient support and the patient's knowledge in relation to the disease and the satisfaction index with the team of professionals in the health area.

2. KNOWLEDGE OF PROSTATE CANCER BEFORE DIAGNOSIS

A total of 32 patients under treatment in the Radiotherapy Sector were selected to participate in the questionnaire, 72% were included because they completely answered the questions; however, 10% were excluded because they did not complete the questions and 18% because they did not return to the radiotherapy sector.

Figure 1 presents the patient's knowledge about prostate cancer even before the discovery of the disease, this approach was fundamental for us to have a generic knowledge of the population's interest in health care. The results showed: 23% of the patients had knowledge about the disease, 43% had little knowledge, 30% had reasonable knowledge and only 4% had good knowledge. As can be seen, more than 65% of the patients did not know the disease or knew little about prostate cancer; however, all the patients who participated in the study (=100%) reported being interested in knowing more about the malignancy. Generally, patients with prostate cancer are reserved in their interviews, avoid sharing the diagnosis and tend to lead a life close to normality in society [6].

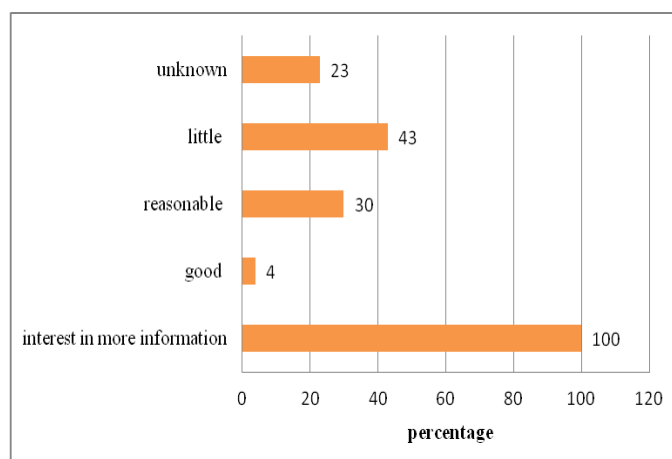


Figure 1: Level of knowledge of the disease

3. MEANS USED TO KNOW ABOUT PROSTATE CANCER AFTER DIAGNOSIS

In Figure 2 are displayed the ways patients get further information. 4% mentioned that they obtained information from family members, 8% through TV, radio, magazines, book, internet, 32% through the diagnosis center and 56% treatment center. Then, the support of the hospital team in understanding the patient with prostate cancer is limited [7].

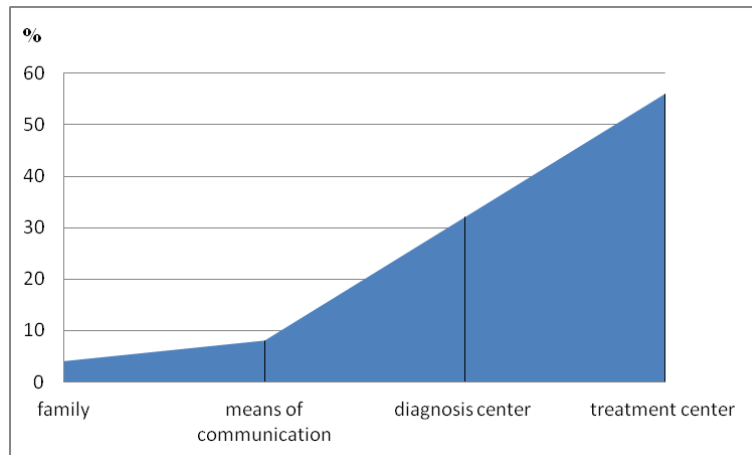


Figure 2: Ways of obtaining information on the disease

4. PARTICIPATION IN THE CHOICE OF TREATMENT AND THE NEED FOR SUPPORT

We analyze the patients' relationship with the healthcare team and their choices. When the patient asks, what is the ideal treatment to be used and seeks information regarding the disease, it is because he wants to be cured [8], and would like to be treated as an individual and not simply as another case [9].

The result of this research shows that although there is a large number of patients who participated in the treatment choice, there is still a significant number of patients who did not have the opportunity to manifest themselves in the decisions taken (Fig 3). A 61% of patients report that they participated in the choice of treatment, but on 39%, the decision was taken unilaterally. Then they were asked if they needed any kind of support during treatment, 65% did need it and 35% did not need it.

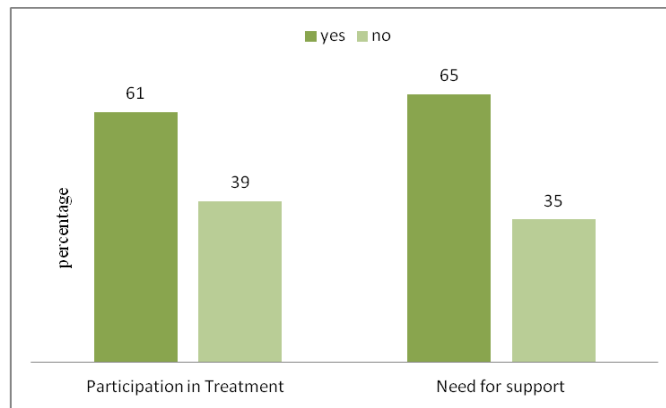


Figure 3: Participation in the choice of treatment and need for support

5. USE OF SPECIALIZED PROFESSIONALS SUPPORT DURING TREATMENT

Present work reports that most patients need support during treatment, but for having a satisfactory index, it is necessary to approaches patients to the information and also to provide support by health teams [10].

We also analyzed which are the specialized professionals support that commonly prostate cancer patients seek and in what proportion. Figure 4 shows that 36% of patients needs physicians, 24% social worker, 24% psychology, 8% nursing assistance, 4% nutritionist and 4% physiotherapist.

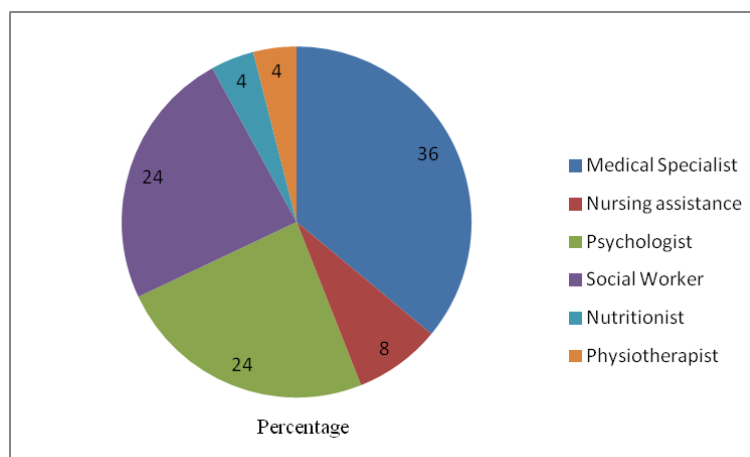


Figure 4: Specialized professionals support during treatment

Since health centers function as important source of the information, we suggest that the entire health structure, together with governmental and non-governmental agencies, would create means for patients to have more knowledge about the disease and the appropriate support for each stage, decreasing the side effects generated by treatment and improving quality of life.

6. CONCLUSIONS

For adequate patient support during treatment it is necessary a detailed humane approach by the healthcare team. In the present research it was evident that most patients need support. Their knowledge about the disease or its symptoms is not sufficiently fulfilled by healthcare team, even that it is the first search instance for them.

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