

ENHANCING SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING AMONG CANCER PATIENTS THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS WITH ONESELF, OTHERS, AND GOD

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Abstract

The objective of this review was to assess the body of research in spiritually-based studies to demonstrate that connections between cancer patients and themselves, other people, and God lead to greater cancer recovery or survival rates. This review specifically looked at the prevalence and methods used to evaluate the significance of these relationships for cancer patients in enhancing their spiritual well-being. Eleven studies were ultimately included in this analysis after a thorough search of available English language literature. Findings showed that patients' ability to learn to live with cancer is significantly impacted by the common spiritual focus on connection with oneself, others, and God. Additionally, the benefits that cancer patients experienced were highlighted by the studies. The results also highlighted the benefits attained by cancer patients as a result of the actions taken in each type of connection for improved disease-coping skills.

Keywords: Cancer Patients, Relationship, God, Spiritual Therapy, Spiritual Well-being

Introduction

With an anticipated 19.3 million new cases worldwide in 2020, cancer will be the second-leading cause of death in the globe, killing 10 million people (1). Overall, the burden of cancer incidence and mortality is fast increasing over the world, and the prevalence of cancer is still rising. In addition to feeling doubtful about carrying out future obligations, receiving a cancer diagnosis undoubtedly causes feelings of worry, anxiety, despair, and gloom (2-4). Cancer research and treatment have paid a lot of attention to and have incorporated the quality of life of cancer patients in recent years. People are worried about their quality of life as well as how long they live (5). Numerous conventional therapies, including radiotherapy, surgery, hormonal and immunological therapy, as well as a symptomatic and supportive therapy, are becoming increasingly accessible due to the increase in cancer incidence (6).

Additionally, it was shown that herbal remedies (42%) and psychological and spiritual therapies (65%) were the most often utilized complementary and alternative medicines (CAM) (7). Traditional CAM has been more popular recently and is increasingly preferred by cancer patients, even those from Western countries

(8). To boost its effectiveness, it is sometimes used with traditional medical care (9). Spirituality has increasingly emerged as a major factor in the study of survivability among all the interventions used to lessen the psychological consequences of cancer patients' illnesses and to enhance their quality of life (10). Research on religion, spirituality, coping mechanisms, and health has grown dramatically in recent years. Spirituality, religion, and faith can also be used as a coping mechanism for cancer diagnosis (11); therefore, it is crucial to give more attention to the spiritual requirements of cancer patients.

When referring to the transcendent and existential aspects of existence, such as God, a higher power, and the meaning and purpose of life, we are referring to the concept of spirituality (12). Understanding the purpose of life, completeness, happiness, individuality, and harmony is essential (13). The degree of faith and submission to an all-powerful entity known as God, who directs man's life and destiny through moral precepts and life lessons that point all significant acts of living towards growth and development, can also be described as spirituality (14). Moreover, by rationally evaluating illness and other challenges in one's life, one can find the meaning of existence (15). For people with

terminal conditions, spirituality is very crucial. These patients might encounter questions about dying and the meaning of life that they hadn't thought about before being sick.

The affirmation of life in relationships with God, oneself, others, and the environment that fosters and sustains a sense of completeness can be used to define spiritual well-being (16). Unlike spirituality, which is more complex and difficult to evaluate, spiritual well-being can be simply quantified because it is objective and observable (17). It is divided into two categories: existential well-being and religious well-being. Religious welfare emphasizes the relationship between the individual and the higher being and refers to the vertical dimension of spirituality, a sense of personal connection with God, or something regarded as absolute (18). However, existential well-being is a horizontal aspect of spirituality that refers to how one perceives the meaning and enjoyment of life (18). One sort of spiritual wellness practice that involves being in a state of real caring, kindness, love, or empathy and aiming to unite with the Supreme Being is meditation (19).

People employ coping as a fundamental strategy to recognize, evaluate, and learn from stressful situations. When patients sought out spiritual support and connection, including other people, they developed effective coping mechanisms (20). Researchers came to the conclusion that people frequently used strategies that focused on developing a solid relationship with God, a strong sense of faith, and a reliable worldview. Additionally, the majority of cancer patients recognized the value of intimate, personal ties with loved ones, friends, and God (21). This study also highlighted the significance of relationships with cancer patients and the interdependence of the social and spiritual spheres. A thorough analysis of the literature will present compelling evidence for how the linkages benefit cancer patients' spiritual well-being. By analyzing the practices of spiritual, complementary, and alternative medicine (CAM), which result in connections between cancer patients and oneself, others, and God, this review's objective is to evaluate the evidence of spiritual-based beliefs on the connections between cancer patients and oneself, others, and God in the literature. By examining the spiritual, complementary, and alternative medicine (CAM) practices that have a positive impact on cancer patients' spiritual well-being, the review's objective is to assess the evidence of spiritual-based beliefs on the connections between cancer patients and oneself, others, and God in the literature.

Materials and Methods

In this review, content analysis was the method employed, and ideas were retrieved and arranged in a conceptual way (22). With this method, the categories are deduced straight from the texts. Its methodical

analysis and categorization of textual data (such as records and interviews) enables repeatable and applicable data interpretations (23)

Case reports, prior reviews, letters, and editorials were not included in the primary study, which was limited to material that has been published in peer-reviewed English-language publications. Additionally, omitted were unpublished theses, clinical trials, academic conference proceedings, and peer-reviewed publications in languages other than English. There were no restrictions on the number of study participants or the outcome metrics that were being employed. This analysis took into account earlier investigations of spiritual practices among cancer patients that have been published after the year 2000.

This study was conducted according to the Reporting Standards for Systematic Evidence Syntheses (ROSES) protocol (5). JSTOR Archive (<https://www.jstor.org>) and Science Direct, two reputable databases for published studies, were used to conduct this review (www.sciencedirect.com). Initial searches were conducted using terms like "spirituality," "spiritual well-being," and "cancer." Then, a more focused search was conducted using extra keywords like "religion," "God," "support group," "religious practices," and "spiritual wellness." The following information was used to classify each article: the author(s), year, journal, volume, edition, page number, kind of cancer, patient's spiritual or religious practices, religion, country or place, and conclusion. Eleven articles were included and examined in this review based on the selection criteria.

Review of the relationship between cancer patients to themselves, others, and god in improving spiritual well-being

Based on the articles reviewed, the spiritual practices involved in the therapies for cancer patients were divided into three main divisions of connections. They are: a) the connection between cancer patients to oneself, b) the connection between cancer patients to others, and c) the connection between cancer patients to God. It was divided in such a manner to simplify each target; including the patients, the physicians and the people to have an idea of what they could or should do upon encountering cancer cases.

The connection between cancer patients to oneself means they experience a more meaningful connection towards themselves which can increase their self-understanding, and self-love, become a better person, and gain a new perspective on life as a result of going through cancer. Connection to others is expressed as the meaningful, positive connections to others that cancer patients perceive as being important in their coping experience. These others may include family members, friends, other cancer patients, or members of the treatment team. Connection to God may involve increased closeness with God, the importance of having a connection with God when coping with cancer, and a desire to seek God's presence. Tables I, II and III present

each of the connection division with examples of spiritual practices and the significant outcomes.

Discussion

Cancer patients' relationships with God, others, and themselves have been shown to have a substantial impact on how they learn to live with the disease. Cancer patients and survivors may endure intense emotional distress as they attempt to adapt and cope with their condition in order to recover. Patients with cancer typically waste a lot of energy coping with their diagnosis, their treatment, and the sense of insecurity brought on by the possibility of deterioration, mortality, complications, and financial difficulties. They occasionally reach a point where they are extremely anxious and apprehensive (3). Patients with cancer may occasionally experience a loss of hope and dreams, as well as physical and psychological effects (34). Additionally, it causes illnesses including sadness, loneliness, and inadequate disease adaptability. Regardless of the patients' religious backgrounds, this review demonstrates that spiritual and religious rituals have been extensively practiced. The positive effects of the practices included encouraging patients to act with a positive attitude (28), showing respect for the medical staff and recommended treatments (28), and providing reassuring hope for a potential cure and their future in addition to encouraging them to learn more about their condition and treatment (4). This implies that the patient's positive devotion is stronger. The more favorable the effects on coping with their sickness were toward religion (31).

The process of dealing with stress is mediated by spiritual assessments and coping mechanisms. Initial attempts to make sense of the stressor in light of one's moral principles are included in moral judgments. Spiritual coping also involves various coping mechanisms that a person employs in response to the stressor (focused on issues) or associated emotional responses (emotion-focused). Any aspect of a person's life, including employment, general living philosophy, interpersonal connections, behaviors, and/or whichever God that person believes in, may be addressed by a spiritual process of making meanings (or finding meaning in an event) (36).

In terms of the relationship between cancer patients and oneself (Table I), it focuses on how patients' perspectives on the realities of cancer that they must confront have changed. As a result of undergoing treatment for cancer, this connection can also be described as improved self-awareness, enhanced self-love, becoming a better person, and developing new perspectives on life (28). The majority of patients find peace by engaging in activities that are recommended by their faith in order to promote healthy mental states (26). Patients considered their battle with cancer to be a soul-awakening event that helped them realize previously hidden pleasures in life (24).

Regarding the link between cancer patients and others (Table II), they stated that variables aiding coping effort included others' encouragement for the patient to begin their treatment, the friendliness of medical staff, and also the patient's own encouragement to feel more confident in themselves (4). Patients did not continuously talk about their illnesses and expected others to treat them and interact with them normally (4). Studies have also shown that people's behavior toward patients and their feelings of sympathy for them are factors that aid the patients in adjusting to their illnesses (4). They are willing to assist others in finding more purpose and hope in their life while also fostering hope in others (28). In addition, many people mentioned the strength they gained from being able to keep their ties to their families. Family members and close friends play a crucial role in meeting spiritual needs, giving cancer sufferers comfort and hope (4, 28). As a source of support, patients can share and discuss their ideas with their friends and family about certain difficulties. Opportunities to continue loving and being loved, feeling connected to their social sphere, and feeling useful were highly regarded.

Additionally, the majority of them frequently participate in extracurricular activities like volunteer work and charitable endeavors. By improving the world, volunteering can give people a renewed feeling of self and purpose. These activities increase their enjoyment of life and foster the patients' positive attitudes toward their environment (28). Patients feel that by engaging in their own religious practices, the relationship they have with God (Table III) also benefits them more.

Cancer patients' relationships with God, other people, and themselves are intertwined. Patients who make an effort to accept that they have cancer (33), deepen their relationship with God, which enables them to maintain a realistic sense of their current state of well-being (32). Researchers emphasized the significance of a personal relationship with God as a spiritual practice that may help people cope with stress by fostering hope, optimism, and inner strength (4). A perspective like this can help individuals stay more emotionally stable and involved in various facets of their lives. Patients have turned to God for meaning when dealing with more upsetting or difficult conditions.

Accepting diseases requires a strong sense of spirituality and participation in religious rituals like prayer. When dealing with cancer, prayer is crucial because it helps sufferers maintain their spiritual health (33). Another aspect affecting their relationship with God is the disease's worsening character, which leaves them with little control over their state and internal resources. Their connection to God and the supporting relationship they had with Him will help them accept their condition in a healthy way (24).

Table 1: Connection between Cancer Patients to Oneself in Improving Spiritual Well-Being

Author	Sample of patients	Cancer diagnosis	Religion	Practices	Outcomes
Holt et al. (2012) (28)	N ¹ = 100, The average age = 58.54 years old	Breast, prostate, lung, colorectal and others	N/I ²	Spiritual practices	Self-understanding Patients are able to accept the truth Patients develop into better people.
Hatami-pour et al. (2015) (4)	N ¹ = 18, Age = 22 to 72 years old	Gastrointestinal tract, liver, lung, leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkins, breast, uterus and ovary	Islam	Patients look for or consider the purpose of the sickness.	The patients are feeling optimistic about their recovery. Patients acknowledge that their illnesses are real. Patients hope that their deaths would end peacefully. Cancer serves as a turning point and alters how they view their lives.
Guz et al. (2012) (26)	N ¹ = 110, Age (Mean ± SD ³) = 55.5 ± 14.5 years	Breast, head, neck, gastrointestinal tract, urinary, lung, skin, gynecologic, lymphoma, soft tissue and brain	The majority is Islam	Charms (muska) are written and worn to bring good luck to oneself Patients consume water that have been recited with prayer Patients washed their body with molten lead Patients visit the tomb of religious person to pray for their own better recovery	Patients experience a stable inner calm, which lessens emotions of hopelessness.
Murray et al. (2004) (30)	N ¹ = 12, The average age = 65 years old	Lung	N/I ²	Patients try to accept the reality of the cancer	Cancer patients are better able to concentrate and feel more motivated.
Lengacher et al. (2003) (29)	N ¹ = 105, The average age = 59 years old	Breast	N/I ²	Patients engage in spiritual healing techniques such as guided visualisation and meditation.	Patients are more optimistic about their therapy now.
Henderson & Donatelle (2004) (27)	N ¹ = 551, The average age = 64 years old	Breast	N/I ²	Patients practice spiritual healing Relaxation and meditation	Patients are looking forward for fast recovery

Alferi et al. (2001) (25)	N ¹ = 231, The average age = 56 years	Breast	N/I ¹	Patients frequently employ or seek out additional complementary therapies, such as prayer, visualisation, and spiritual healing.	Patients feel more motivated to fight the disease
Ahmad et al. (2011) (24)	N ¹ = 3, The average age = 41.67 years old	Breast	Islam	Patients look for the cause of their illness. Patients constantly strive to be upbeat and never give up on their illness.	The cancer changes the patients' life and death perspective Patients accept the reality
Lee et al. (2000) (19)	N ¹ = 379, Age = Under 70 years old	Breast	Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Islam, Buddhist, ancestor worship, and others	Patients practice spiritual healing such as meditation	Patients feel more tranquil and ease the burden in their minds

¹Number of patients; ²Not indicated; ³Standard deviation

Table 2: Connection between Cancer Patients to Others in Improving Spiritual Well-Being

Author	Sample of patients	Cancer diagnosis	Religion	Practices	Outcomes
Lee et al. (2000) (19)	N ¹ = 379, Age = Under 70 years old	Breast	Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Islam, Buddhist, ancestor worship, and others	Patients are attending support groups, joining prayer institutions or community groups	Patients get more social support and develop good connection with other people
Holt et al. (2012) (28)	N ¹ = 100, The average age = 58.54 years old	Breast, prostate, lung, colorectal and others	N/I ²	Doing charity and volunteer activities Patients help their fellow friends that are suffering the same diseases	Patients feel more closer to their family and friends Relationship with other cancer patients are generously formed Patients develop good relationship with people from the church as well as medical staffs Patients enjoy the daily lives Patients are passionate to help other people with their cancer experience
Hatamipour et al. (2015) (4)	N ¹ = 18, Age = From 22 to 72 years old	Gastrointestinal tract, liver, lung, leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkins, breast, uterus and ovary	Islam	Patients discuss about their illness with family and friends Patients seek for advices from people around them	Patients perceive social support including from family, relatives, and friends especially emotional and psychological support Patients can feel the normal perception towards them, not a pitiful insight
Ahmad et al. (2011) (24)	N ¹ = 3, The average age of 41.67 years old	Breast	Islam	Patients consult their family and friends Patients fill their leisure time by doing charity works	Patients become more appreciative towards the support given by people around them

¹Number of patients; ²Not indicated

Table 3: Connection between Cancer Patients to God in Improving Spiritual Well-Being

Author	Sample of patients	Cancer diagnosis	Religion	Practices	Outcomes
Holt et al. (2012) (28)	N ¹ = 100, The average age = 58.54 years old	Breast, prostate, lung, colorectal and others	N/I ²	Patients strengthen the relationship with God Seeking God's presence more	Patients start to realize the presence of God and strengthen the relationship with God The cancer experience make the patients grateful with life
Tatsumura et al. (2003) (31)	N ¹ = 143, Age = More than 18 years old	Breast, prostate, and gastrointestinal tract	N/I ²	Patients increase their personal faith Patients require the spiritual need by praying closeness with God is considered important for patients Patients spend their time by reading the Bible	Patients become more optimistic and believe in their religious faith and God
Guz et al. (2012) (33)	N ¹ = 110, The average age = 55.5 ± 14.5 years old	Breast, head, neck, gastrointestinal tract, urinary, lung, skin, gynecologic, lymphoma, soft tissue and brain	The majority is Islam	Patients attach importance for the need of prayer	Patients relieve stress and retain a sense of control
Hatamipour et al. (2015) (4)	N ¹ = 18, Age = 22 to 72 years old	Gastrointestinal tract, liver, lung, leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkins, breast, uterus and ovary	Islam	Patients seek spiritual needs to gain inner peace The need for forgiveness from God and others are crucial for the patients Patients make use of the cancer phase to strengthen the spiritual belief more, as well as the closeness with God Patients claim the importance of prayers and religious rites	Leading an overall sense of hope and optimism towards life

Gall et al. (2004) (32)	N ¹ = 34, The average age = 65.8 years old	Prostate	Protestan, Catholics, and others	Patients strengthen the relationship with God	Greater sense of internal control over illness management
Murray et al. (2004) (30)	N ¹ = 12, The average age = 65 years old	Lung	N/I ²	Patients always pray for the good health and recovery	Patients have more positive thoughts regarding the illness
Lengacher et al. (2003) (29)	N ¹ = 105, The average age = 59 years old	Breast	N/I ²	Patients tend to spend some time to pray	Patients feel at ease and in peace after prayer
Ahmad et al. (2011) (24)	N ¹ = 3, The average age = 41.67 years old	Breast	Islam	Patients strengthen the relationship with God	Positive acceptance of their illness

¹Number of patients; ² Not indicated

An individual might experience a sense of self-acceptance and belonging as well as emotional support when dealing with a life-threatening illness by feeling that they have a good relationship with God. Many cancer patients claimed to have an active and personal relationship with God, which made them feel less alone and gave them the strength to battle their illness (28).

In addition, patients who participate in religious institutions or community support groups (19) hope to deepen their spiritual convictions, which will make them feel more appreciative of their own lives (28). All of them demonstrate how crucial these relationships are for the spiritual health of cancer sufferers. While significant cancer treatments are made possible by conventional medical care, it may not be sufficient to appreciate the breadth and depth of problems faced by cancer survivors. Thus, spiritual considerations like the significance of these bonds with cancer patients might be seen as crucial assistance for medical professionals and educators in assisting the patients in having a higher quality of life. The measures made may enhance the quality of life for survivors. The results may help with future research on the functions of spirituality in successful coping and spiritual well-being in cancer patients' lives.

Conclusion

The framework for exploring the benefits of spiritual practices and the connections between cancer patients and themselves, other people, and God has been developed by this review. The emergent concepts can be expressed by grasping this broad framework. To make a cancer patient's soul happy and healthy, spiritual awareness is crucial. In addition to taking the cutting-edge treatments recommended by doctors, cancer patients must have a spiritual knowledge in order to take care of themselves. Cancer sufferers must be committed to controlling their thoughts and feelings for their best well-being in order to experience spiritual healing. This gives cancer sufferers the strength to deal with their agony and the fortitude to face their enemies. The results showed that these linkages have positive effects on both the physical and spiritual levels and may be used in conjunction with traditional medical care.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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