

Paper Session E2: Individuals with Cancer: Current Experiences & Emerging Themes

Spoken Words and the Allusion of Reassurance: The Dance of Collaborative Distancing

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Purpose: To explore the lived experience of recipient's of a cancer diagnosis, through focusing on the narratives regarding how the diagnosis was given and the power of words used by health-care professionals when dealing with them.

Background: It is estimated that 1.5 million new cases of cancer will be diagnosed in 2010 (ACS). How that diagnosis is given to the person is vitally important for their psychological, physical and spiritual wellbeing. To be given a cancer diagnose is a traumatic experience, the psychological impact of which cannot be underestimated.

Methods: The study was guided by Hermeneutic phenomenology. Snowball sampling was used to invite people who received a cancer diagnosis to participate in the study. The focus of this presentation will be on the narrative of 10 recipients and the meanings which they attributed to their story. Unstructured in-depth interviews were used to collect the data. The goal of analysis was to provide descriptions that capture and communicate the meaning of the lived experience

Results: Three themes emerged that encapsulated the experience of recipients, recognizing the trajectory from the pre-diagnostic stage to the post labeling of a cancer diagnosis and its meaning for the person so diagnosed. The themes that emerged fell into three distinct yet interwoven periods, "Disturbance of the Everyday-World," "Surfacing within the Lived World" and "Embodiment within the Lived World".

Conclusion: Truth and openness were seen as critical to enabling the person to cope with their diagnosis. The need to have ones suspicions acknowledged and not dismissed and an overwhelming cry for recognition as a person was paramount. Future research is needed in exploring language used when dealing with people who are diagnosed with cancer and multi-professional training in breaking bad news is necessary if we are to enable people to fully 'know' their diagnosis.