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Responsibilities and difficulties of caregivers of cancer patients in home care

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Background: From having been known as a virulent disease in 1970s, cancer is now considered a chronic disease and about two thirds of cancer patients live for five years after diagnosis. Home care has gradually gained more importance and it is a great burden on the shoulders of caregivers. Caregivers have to undertake the responsibility of the cancer patient's home management and organize care and arrange health care services according to the ever-changing condition of patients. Caregivers should be prepared for home care so they can provide accurate and complete care. This descriptive study aimed to investigate challenges that caregivers encounter in the home care of patients and the reasons for these challenges.

Materials & Methods: The research group consisted of caregivers of outpatients in a daily treatment center in a university hospital. The research sample consisted of 137 voluntary caregivers of patients who attended the Daily Treatment Center for control, chemotherapy or other supportive cares services between January-June, 2011. Data were collected with face-to-face interviews in the Daily Treatment Center. Ethics Committee approval was taken from the university hospital; caregivers and their patients were informed about the research and their approval was obtained as well.

Results: It was found that 54.0% of caregivers helped with patient's nutrition, 50.4% with medicine use, 26.3% with oral hygiene, 26.3% with meeting urinary needs and 51.8% with changing clothes. In addition, 69.3% of caregivers helped to change bed sheets, 38.7% assisted patients to communicate with their environment and 71.5% to bring the patient to hospital or outside.

Conclusions: In this study, it was found that Turkish caregivers experience challenges due to following factors: Patient nutrition, medicine use, oral and body hygiene, colostomy maintenance and stomach tube feeding, concern of dropping the patient, feeling incompetence in body temperature and fever control, fatigue and lack of personal time.

Biography

Ayfer Elcigil was graduated from Hacettepe University School of Nursing in 1992. She has completed her PhD In 2003 from Ege University School of Nursing. She has interest and experience for Palliative care and involved many educational activities; the most prominent of these being the Chair of Palliative Care Working Group of TONA.

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