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Regaining familiarity with own body after treatment for operable lung cancer – A qualitative longitudinal exploration

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Little is known about the experiences of operable lung cancer patients during treatment in a clinical setting based on fast-track surgery. The study aimed to explore (1) the embodied meaning of illness in patients with operable lung cancer during treatment to 4 months after surgery and (2) patterns of change over time that may affect the patients' daily lives. Twenty patients referred for lung cancer surgery were interviewed three times, corresponding to potential critical transition points following surgery: hospitalization; hospital-to-home transition; and resumption of daily life activities. Data collection, analysis and interpretation followed a phenomenological hermeneutical approach inspired by Ricoeur and the theoretical framework was grounded in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception. The findings reveal the process patients went through in regaining familiarity with their own body after lung cancer treatment. Through the post-operative trajectory the patients' resumption of daily activities involved adjusting to a new awareness of everyday life, physical restrictions and their perception of themselves. The findings are expressed in four sub-themes: (1) perceptions of embodied alterations; (2) transformation of embodied structures in the transition from hospital to home was unexpectedly challenging; (3) embodied perceptions of the inter-subjective world; and (4) transforming embodied disruptions into bodily awareness. Patients experienced a smooth treatment trajectory regarding physical consequences of illness and treatment which might be due to the fast-track surgery. Clinicians should be aware of patients' experiences of illness to facilitate patient reconstitution of own identity.

Biography

Malene Missel has a Masters in Nursing and has completed her PhD in March 2016 from faculty of health and medical sciences, Copenhagen University Denmark. She is working as a clinical nurse specialist at the department of thoracic surgery with care, nursing and rehabilitation for patients with operable lung cancer.

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