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Streams in the desert- the illness trajectory of initial infection for hepatitis C patients

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Hepatitis C virus (HCV) is a global public health issue, and affects nearly 170 million individuals worldwide. The course of HCV is slow and insidious. Most hepatitis C patients have few symptoms or are asymptomatic. Thus, they are apt to neglect this disease and will likely progress to liver cirrhosis or hepatocellular carcinoma within 20 years. During these asymptomatic periods, persons living with HCV may unknowingly infect many others. Preventive care and early detection of HCV patients is very important. Very little is known about how these potentially impacted issues and adjusted experiences may be related in initial infection HCV patients. This study aims to explore the impact perspectives and adjusted experiences of the HCV patients initially facing their unpredictable illness trajectory in Taiwan.

This study used a qualitative descriptive design, collecting data via in-depth interviews to investigate situational meaning from participants' perspective. Data were analyzed using content analysis. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who were initial infection hepatitis C patients.

A total of 21 participants were recruited. The core theme describing the HCV patients initially facing their illness trajectory was 'Streams in the desert'. The results present the participants' life experiences through three key themes: 'Unexpected changes', 'Get a lost journey', and 'The calm after the storm'.

This study highlights several important issues in HCV patients to which health professionals need to pay more attention. Based on the perceptions and experiences of these participants, we can thereby bring more awareness to the progression and care of hepatitis C patients. Health providers must establish an effective infection prevention program to reduce infection risk and to be a coordinator to integrate different opinions between patients and multidisciplinary teams. Design an educational intervention and build a website for patients and populace to improve the HCV knowledge.

Biography

Shu-Mei Tsai is a PhD Candidate in Graduate Institute of Clinical Medical Sciences, College of Medicine at Chang Gung University. She received her B.S. degree from Kaohsiung Medical University of Nursing, in 1995 and M.S. degree from Kaohsiung Medical University in 2003, Kaohsiung, Taiwan. Her research interests are in healthcare management and adult health nursing.

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