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Health related quality of life in mothers with children with cancer: A systematic review

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Background: Studies among parents of children with cancer have focused on anxiety, depression, or post-traumatic stress, and less so on overall measures, such as health-related quality of life (HRQoL).

Methods: Literature review in Scopus and CINAHL with terms: mothers or carers etc., and child* or adolesc* etc., and cancer or oncolog* etc., and quality of life or HRQoL etc., in 65 combinations. Selection criteria: mothers (or predominately in mixed samples), children aged<18 in active treatment (no palliative), quantitative, some measure of quality of life, comparative (e.g. population norms, or control group) or correlational, or baseline in interventions, English language, prior 2015.

Results: Of 237 studies reviewed in full-text among 2184, 10 fulfilled all criteria: 6 mothers only, 4 mixed with separate results for mothers, and additional 10 with sample of predominately mothers. With the exception of a series of studies from Canada (N>400), most studies had small sample sizes (N<150). European studies originated from limited number of settings. There were single-sample correlational studies (e.g. coping, anxiety, depression, sleep quality), internal comparisons (e.g. single- vs two-parent families, time since diagnosis, or same group longitudinal, etc.) or external (i.e. mothers of healthy children, or other diagnosis, or population norms). SF-36 was commonly used. In studies with external comparison, quality of life was significantly reduced amongst mothers (or parents) of children with cancer. Despite cross-national heterogeneity, in studies that the SF-36 commonly effect sizes were in the range of 0.5-1 SD for mental health and ~0.5 SD for physical health dimension.

Conclusions: Physical health as well as mental health aspects of the quality of life appears affected in this vulnerable group, highlighting the need to monitor and incorporate QoL as an outcome measure in assessing the effectiveness of psychosocial intervention programs.

Biography

Christiana Nicolaou joined the Department of Nursing, School of Health Sciences, Cyprus University of Technology in 2007 as Senior Lecturer. Currently, she is an Assistant Professor in Pediatric Nursing (since 2011), elected member of the CUT Senate and elected member of the Council of the Department of Nursing (CUT). She worked as Staff Nurse in Pediatric Unit and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (Archbishop Makarios Hospital, Nicosia, 1987 - 1994) and in a Gynecological and Midwifery Clinic, Nicosia (1986-1987). She has received her Diploma in General Nursing from School of Nursing, Cyprus (1985), a BSc (Honors) in Professional Studies (Nurse Education) from Anglia Polytechnic University, UK (1997), a Certificate in Teaching and Learning Methodology (Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus, 2001) and her PhD in Epidemiology and Biostatistics from the Cyprus University of Technology (2015). Her area of clinical practice and research is pediatric nursing care and social epidemiology.

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