

Compassionate Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) for Cancer: The Human Touch

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Abstract

We have witnessed tremendous progress in cancer treatment and care during the past decades and with continuous innovations with one discovery building on another are responsible for most new advances in medicine that often leads to early detection and more effective options for treatment. However a diagnosis of cancer is still likely to be frightening and it often brings up a wide range of difficult emotions which have the significant impact on many areas of a person's life. In this pursuit, a new dimension has been developed to work along with the clinical assessment and medical management-Emotion-Focussed Therapy (EFT). Emotion-focused therapy is empirically supported humanistic treatment that arose out the theoretical integration of research on psychotherapy with ideas from constructivist psychology, emotion theory and attachment theory.

Keywords: Cancer; Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT); Psychotherapy; Health therapists

Introduction

We have seen huge progresses in cancer treatment and care during the past times. The support of a mental health professional/emotional therapist may help one cope with psychological impact and may be an important aspect of treatment for both those who have cancer and their loved ones. A diagnosis of cancer is likely to be frightening and life-altering, especially if the diagnosed type of cancer grows quickly or has already spread to other parts of the body. A person diagnosed with an advanced stage of cancer may experience feeling of stress, worry, anxiety, sadness or depression and the inevitable approach of fear of death.

Many doctors encourage their patients to seek out a therapist after a diagnosis of a cancer. It is scientifically proven that the patients undergoing therapeutic healing respond to the clinical treatment more effectively. An emotional therapist applies the knowledge and tools of clinical psychology to help people who are dealing with cancer. The kind of help that cancer patients need varies gently from person to person and from family to family. To provide help, an emotional therapist must be familiar with the reality that patients are living, with he or she should be aware of different types of cancer and the medical treatments for them, about the side effects of these treatments and about the many challenges and dilemmas that people with cancer face all the time.

As cancer can causes psychological problems, such as haunting anxiety or a deep depression. It can also create problems with in a marriage or family. The emotional needs of a spouse or a family member for example, can be at odds with what the patient needs. So a therapist can fit into the bill and can also help to deal with the problems like that [1,2].

Most therapist are of the opinion that, more than anything else, people with cancer just need someone to talk with about what they are going through and how they are coping with it. They need someone who is not a relative or friend but someone associated with the hospital that can allay their fears with an authentic medical background. They need someone who knows about cancer and what it's like to be dealing with it and thus can give empathetic listening with understanding and support [2].

Literature Review

Emotional therapist seeks to create a safe environment for patients

to express their emotions. Too often, people with cancer hold back or monitor their emotional expression in order to protect their loved ones or they hold back because they pride themselves in "being stronger or think others will only admire and support them if they act that way". They might hold back with a therapist as well but most important role of a therapist is to reassure a patient that they don't need to be protected and help the patients to cope up with the situation [1]. The goal is to help patients feel that it's okay to be them and to express whatever reactions they may be experiencing. Sadly and too often, people with cancer must face their eventual death as their illness progresses. For many this is anguishing process. An emotional therapist can help people with the emotional, existential and spiritual issues involved in facing death and coming to terms with it, which the patient is struggling to do so [3].

Pre-requisites for an emotional therapist

- Empathetic Attitude.
- Analytical skills.
- Communication skills.
- Observational skills.
- Patience.
- People skills.
- Problem solving skills.
- Trustworthiness.

Role of an emotional therapist

- They help people discuss some of the issues they are experiencing.

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- Help people develop strategies to help them relax, be more active and improve their mood.
- Therapist can also assist in communicating with family members and help individuals [4].
- Feelings of sadness, anger, confusion and helplessness come with a cancer diagnosis, so a therapist can provide a comforting presence and practical support [5].
- Creating a safe and serene atmosphere for patients to express their emotions.
- To make them feel at ease and allay their fears about the disease, diagnosis and treatment.
- By exposing them to the positive aspects of life, deviating their mind from the agonizing trauma and suffering.
- A happy and comforting ambience filled with optimism and liveliness can make a very big difference on the mindset of the people who is on the verge of depression and self-induced conflicts.

Methods

The methods which are adopted by an emotional therapist:

To be an proactive listener

This is a technique that professionals use to show respect. It is very helpful way to show that were connecting to the patient or family member's words and feelings. All it takes is to give full attention, avoid thinking about what comes next or hurrying the conversation and forcing it to a conclusion.

Cautious phrasing and framing of questions

Practicing caution when asking questions and should also consider the no. of questions that should be asked in a conversation. People with cancer are often asked many questions by the family and friends who can become tiresome for them.

- Involving the patients in topics of conversations of their choice other than cancer.
- Encouraging the person to stay involved in their field of interest which is physically permeable to them.
- To advice the patient to try and practice stress-relieving activities such as meditation, yoga etc.
- Arranging an interaction with cancer survivors/people who can be empathetic to their situation.
- Inculcating the self-confidence in the patients to deal with the situation with stronger will power.
- Advising the patients to find humor or find something to laugh about.
- Advising the usage of internet wisely leaving the unwanted information-as everything given is not appropriate and connected to everyone's situation.
- Encouraging the patient to maintain a dairy to release the pent up feelings and emotions in a written form.

Strategic Planning of Emotional Therapist

The course of action plan to deal with emotional management of the

traumatic cancer patients is executed in three stages.

Pre-treatment stage

In this stage the patient may feel that "No One Understands" what I am going through (ongoing trauma). It is important at this time to gather as much information about the patient and his treatment methods. So the mode of counseling should start with an assurance, as well as interaction with cancer survivors to boost up their spirits and moral.

Mid-treatment stage

The patient may feel overwhelmed even unable to manage daily responsibilities. It will be a normal reaction and often reflects the strain on the physical and emotional energy as the patient manages treatment and copes with the situation. Many people at this stage longs to find a support which will be very helpful at this juncture and can also learn from others about helps them in the situation.

Post-treatment stage

The patient may feel abandoned by the health care team or other supportive people who were so much involved during treatment process; or again fearing the reoccurrence of the cancer. At this situation, the emotional therapist can play a very vital role by making their transition from "Being Ill to Living Well" after cancer.

Conclusion

The challenge of "Positive Attitude, Optimism and Hope". A hopeful person can experience a wide range of negative and positive emotions; yet through all of the difficulties will try to move forward in life. An emotional therapist can understand that hope and optimism are very important relation to quality of life and if longer survival is not possible, then it is reasonably to hope for other meaningful outcomes-like a peaceful death or the resolution of family conflicts. The journey with the emotional therapist emphasizes on the concept that "You are not Alone-You are in Caring and Comforting Hands to Travel along with You in Your Journey of Emotional Upheavals" [6,7].

It is worth remembering that the bedrock of all therapy is the development of a relationship and emotional responsiveness is at the heart of this unique form of personal and professional intimacy.

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