

## The evolution of the socio-cultural and religious characteristics of cancer patients in Morocco: case of the National Institute of Oncology Rabat

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### Abstract

**Background:** In 2020, Morocco recorded more than 59,370 new cases of cancer and more than 35,265 cases of death (International Agency for Research on Cancer, Annual report Morocco, 2020). Cancer is always accompanied by socially constructed, differentiated, and contingent interpretations and practices according to the socio-cultural and religious characteristics of each region. The study aims at describing the evolution of the socio-cultural and religious aspects of Moroccan cancer patients followed at the National Institute of Oncology (NIO) of Rabat between 2010 and 2020. **Methods:** We have prospectively studied all cancer cases diagnosed at the National Oncology Institute (NIO), Rabat in 2019. We have collected 1102 cases. The data collected was compared with the results of the study carried out in 2010 (1600 cases). Statistical analysis has been assessed by SPSS 20 software and the correlations between sociocultural characteristics were examined using a chi-square test. **Results:** From a socio-economic point of view, almost all patients claim that cancer is a costly disease as well as a disease that leads to a drop in income and the inevitable impoverishment of Moroccan patients. The illiteracy rate is still high; rising from 38% in 2010 to 42.80% in 2020. On the psychological level, damage to body image (alopecia, mastectomy, hysterectomy,) can lead to stigmatizing and harms the marital relationship. The number of patients experiencing divorce and marital separation that seems to occur following cancer pathology remains high, despite a decrease of nearly 50% between 2010 and 2020. Concerning the spiritual aspect, in the Arab-Amazigh Muslim culture, the impact of the occurrence of cancer is very particular, and the repercussions are assessed differently depending on the degree of conviction. For practicing believers, cancer is considered a divine test and an opportunity to improve. In the Qur'an, God tests the best of his disciples to reward them. The rate of practicing believers has evolved from 49% in 2010 to 85.50% in 2020. But for non-practicing believers, cancer is regarded as a divine punishment coming from outside. New behaviors reported by this research concern the use of "roquia". This spiritual cure is considered as an anti-cancer remedy. It uses Allah's words from the holy "Qur'an", his fairest names and his attributes. 42% of patients use "roquia". Concerning phytotherapy, there was an increase in the percentage of participants using medicinal plants and even the most harmful plants (Arestiloch, Euphorbia) from 26% in 2010 to 51.50% in 2020. **Conclusion:** The precarious social level of cancer patients, the lack of social and medical coverage, illiteracy, and lack of knowledge of religion, as well as dissatisfaction with conventional medicine, may lead patients to the use of traditional medicine (medicinal plants, visit of "marabouts", "roquia"). This can have a negative impact on the quality of access to oncology care.

### Biography

Mr. Fahd Elkhalloufi is currently the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, Mohammed V University, Rabat, Morocco