Cancer-Related Psychological Distress: A Concept Analysis

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Background: Cancer-related psychological distress, as a concept, has limited research literature substantiation. Several studies report that patients with cancer suffer from significant psychological distress; however, the description of the concept of cancer-related psychological distress has not been clearly defined. Theoretical work based on the concept is also unclear.

Objectives: This article is a report on the concept of cancer-related psychological distress to clarify the concept as separate from non–cancer-related psychological distress and promote the use of the term in nursing practice and research across the cancer trajectory.

Methods: This article used a content analysis to examine the literature. The literature review for this article used CINAHL®, PsycINFO®, and PubMed to search publications from 1999–2016.

Findings: Content analysis of the literature revealed that the term psychological distress was used often with regard to distress in patients with cancer, but the concept of cancer-related psychological distress was not clearly defined. Four attributes encompass the concept of cancer-related psychological distress: depression, anxiety, fear, and feeling discouraged. The primary antecedent to the concept is the cancer diagnosis. The consequences can be positive or negative.

Methods

A literature review of CINAHL®, PsycINFO®, and PubMed databases was conducted to search publications from 1999–2016 using the key words psychological distress, cancer or neoplasm, stress, nursing, and concept analysis. The search was then refined using the following filters: publications from 2011–2016, participants aged 18 years or older, and publications written in the English language. Twenty-four articles were reviewed for potential use in the concept.