

KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTIONS ON CANCER PALLIATIVE CARE AMONG SRI LANKAN NURSES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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The Majority of cancer patients worldwide are in advanced stages of cancer when they come to hospital. At this stage pain relief and palliative care is the only realistic treatment options. Qualitative study design was employed to explore the knowledge and perceptions on needs of nursing personnel with regards to adult cancer patients they are caring for, in the selected institutions. Participants were recruited purposively from National Institute of Cancer Maharagama (NICM), Shantha Sevana Hospicę (SSH), Cancer Home (CH) and Ceylinco Oncology Unit (COU). In-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted. Trustworthiness of the qualitative study was maintained. Max Van Manen's Phenomenological approach was followed to analyze qualitative data and thematic analysis was performed.

Sample consists of 15(43%) participants for in-depth interviews and 20(57%) participants for FGDs. 13.3% male and 86. 7% female nurses. The average age was 35years which ranging from 26 and 50 years. The average experience as a nursing profession was 4 years. None of the nurses had received special training on cancer palliative care prior to the period of intervention.

The key themes identified after analysing both in-depth interviews and FGDs with nurses were 1) desire for continuing education, 2) being stressful, and concerns about raising the quality of care in the face of limited staffing, 3) concerns about implementation of holistic approach and 4) try to be happy.

Participants of the current study were of the view that they need to be adequately knowledgeable to provide quality palliative care and to educate the patients. Nurses identified the heavy workload and the time constraint as barriers to improve the knowledge.

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