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PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP FOR PATIENTS WITH CANCER

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Abstract

The article represents the ethical aspects of the activity of oncology specialist, which is an important component of a comprehensive approach to the treatment and care of patients with cancer. It is noted that compliance with the ethical aspects of medical and psychological care for cancer patients requires the knowledge of oncology specialist of a wide range of physical, emotional, psychological and social effects that may arise as a result of the diagnosis and treatment of an oncopathology. The key ethical principles and their characteristics, which the oncology specialists must adhere to, are outlined. There is emphasized the importance of compliance by oncology specialists with ethical principles for the successful treatment and rehabilitation of cancer patients.

Conclusions. In general, ethical aspects in psycho-oncology are an integral part of professional practice and aim to ensure maximum support, safety and respect for the rights and dignity of each patient. No code of ethics can provide an unequivocal answer to what is right in specific situations, but it serves important functions. It serves as an important basis for decision-making and provides important information to oncologists, their patients and the public about the roles and responsibilities of oncology professionals. In addition, it promotes responsible psychological practice and protection of patients from inappropriate behavior of

doctors, and is used as a tool for reflection and improvement of the work of a specialist in the field of oncology.

Keywords: cancer patients; ethical principles; psychological help; psycho-oncology.

Relevance

The incidence of cancer in Ukraine is characterized by a steady growth trend, which creates an urgent need for the development of psychological services in medical institutions that provide assistance to cancer patients.

Cooperation between an oncology specialist and an oncologist is a deep and multifaceted process of interaction, which poses important challenges to the specialist. Their solution requires constant improvement of professional skills and unconditional observance of high professional standards, in particular ethical norms. It is compliance with these standards and professional ethics that guarantees the provision of high-quality psychological help and protection of the interests of both the specialist and his patients.

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research is the work and research of domestic specialists on the basics of professional ethics of specialists in the field of medicine: A. Agarkova, A. P. Alekseenko, V. P. Bralatan, S. V. Vekovshina, N. M. Voznyuk, Yevtushenko Yu. O., Zhdan V. M., Kornatsky V. M., Kubitsky C. O., etc.

The founder of medical ethics is deservedly considered to be Hippocrates, who systematized the rules of medical ethics that existed at that time based on centuries of experience in medicine. The code of moral norms, mandatory for those who chose to treat people as their profession, was contained in his works "Oath", "About the doctor", "About decent behavior". Hippocrates has a famous saying: "Medicine is the noblest of all arts."

The International Code of Medical Ethics, adopted by the General Assembly of the World Medical Association in 1949 p., with changes and additions in 1968, 1983, 1994 pp. - a document that defines the criteria of unethical behavior of a medical worker, as well as - the duty of a doctor in relation to the patient and to each other.

The moral principles of medico-psychological assistance of a specialist in the medical field are systematized in the Code of Ethics of a doctor of Ukraine, taking into account the provisions of the International Code of Medical Ethics, the Declaration of Helsinki, the General Declaration on the Genome and Human Rights, and the Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity in view of the application of the achievements of biology and medicine.

Professional ethics basically means a system of moral standards, values and principles that function as an internal guide in the behavior and interaction of specialists in a specific field [4]. The ethical principles that guide the specialist in his professional practice are based on generally accepted moral values, such as respect for the individual, protection of the rights and freedoms of the individual, benevolence and the desire to work for the benefit of the client

Oncological diseases belong to the category of diseases with a high stress potential, which requires oncology specialists to know the ethical aspects of interaction with them. Psycho-oncology focuses not only on the physical aspect of cancer treatment, but also on the emotional, psychological and social well-being of patients.

On the physical level, cancer can be accompanied by pain, fatigue, physical deterioration, and changes in appearance. These physical symptoms can affect patients' general well-being and quality of life [1]. For example, pain can cause stress and depression, and fatigue can limit the ability to perform normal daily activities.

On an emotional level, patients face stress, anxiety, fear of the future, and emotional exhaustion. A cancer diagnosis can cause strong emotional reactions, such as shock, feelings of loss of control, or loss of hope [2]. Having emotional support and being able to express their feelings can play a key role in improving patients' psychological well-being.

At the psychological level, patients may face difficulties in coming to terms with the diagnosis, developing coping strategies, and maintaining a positive self-esteem. Psycho-oncology support can help patients discover their inner resources and find ways to overcome the challenges associated with treatment [3].

On a social level, cancer can affect interactions with family, friends and community, as well as social functioning and work. Fear of rejection or social isolation may arise in patients due to stigmatization or uncertainty about how their disease will be perceived by others [5].

In the field of psycho-oncology, ethical issues are extremely important, as they concern not only medical treatment, but also psychological support and relationships between specialists and patients. Therefore, knowledge of the above-mentioned aspects by a specialist in the field of oncology involves the formation of behavior based on ethical principles and will have an impact on the general well-being and quality of life of oncology patients. Understanding and managing these aspects is important for the successful treatment and rehabilitation of cancer patients.

Principles of psychological help for cancer patients

In everyday practice, the vast majority of specialists in the field of oncology possess the necessary technical data and professional skills. However, despite this, every oncologist needs to carefully study himself, his personality traits, his own work style in order to know how it affects the patient. For this, each specialist must go through a long path of self-discovery and self-education. Any professional activity forms the entire personality as a whole.

Medical ethics is the study of the morality of medical workers, their behavior, relationships with patients, colleagues, and society.

The main principles of medical ethics are as follows [6]:

1. Humane attitude towards the patient.
2. Not to take part in actions against the patient's health.
3. Providing assistance to all who need it, regardless of race, political and religious affiliation.
4. Solidarity of all doctors in respecting the dignity of people, their struggle for peace.
5. Preservation of medicinal secrecy.
6. Participation in the protection of people's lives from certain excesses that threaten them.
7. Prohibition of experiments on people.
8. Abstaining from actions that may degrade the dignity of the doctor's profession.

Medical ethics serves as a kind of theoretical basis, justification of the moral and ethical behavior of medical workers.

A constituent part of medical ethics is deontology (from the Greek deon, deontos – proper; proper + logos – teaching). Medical deontology is a set of ethical norms and principles of behavior of a medical worker in the performance of his professional duties. Deontology is the practical application of medical ethics. It deals with the problems of proper behavior of a doctor in the direct performance of his professional duties.

It is necessary that the knowledge of deontology, general psychology and the psychology of working with patients become an organic part of the personality of a specialist in the field of oncology, and not remain only theoretical and abstract. This implies the creative nature and social significance of the activity of a medical specialist, mercy and kindness to patients, tact and tolerance, benevolence, justice, principledness, the ability to work in a team. The ethical culture of specialists in the field of oncology involves three interrelated components: moral consciousness, moral activity, moral relations.

The "doctor-patient" relationship is the cornerstone of medical practice, and therefore of medical ethics. The Declaration of Geneva requires the doctor that "The health of my patient will be my first concern", and the International Code of Medical Ethics says: "The doctor/physician undertakes to his/her patients complete loyalty and all scientific resources available to him/her" [3].

As evidenced by the results of the analysis of scientific works, the professional ethics of a doctor involves awareness of the doctor's professional duty to society and patients, his right to professional dignity and honor, includes the normative principles of a doctor's behavior, the moral and deontological principles of a medical specialist and the principles of professional subordination. The fundamental ethical knowledge that determines the professional and ethical qualities of a specialist in the field of oncology are: moral duty, moral responsibility, justice, honor and dignity, medical tact, demandingness, tolerance, etc.

Taking into account the peculiarities of communication with oncology patients regarding information about the disease, coordinated work of the team of oncology institutions is necessary, which excludes the possibility of incorrect conversations with patients on the part of the average medical staff or doctors who do not directly treat the patient," - believes one of the leading oncologists academician M. M. Blokhin In this regard, it should be recalled that nurses and paramedics of district polyclinics, emergency and emergency care stations, and other "non-oncology" institutions should know and implement the tactics of "psychological respect" for a patient with a malignant tumor [6].

Care of inoperable patients with widespread tumor processes requires special tact and skill from medical workers. Intensive complex treatment should be carried out until the last days of the patient's life, because the same painful situation at different times can turn from hopeless to controlled, to one that is amenable, if not to treatment, to some stabilization

The main principles of psychological help of a psycho-oncologist are determined both by the general ethical norms of psychotherapeutic practice and by the specifics of the oncological context.

One of the most important principles of psychological care in oncology is the individualization of the approach to each patient. Since the response to the diagnosis and the treatment process can be very different for everyone, the psychologist must take into account the unique characteristics of each patient and create individualized psychological support and therapy programs. Given that each person has unique needs, responses, and resources to cope with a cancer diagnosis and treatment. An individual approach consists in taking into account

all aspects of the patient's life and personality when providing psychological support and assistance [4].

In the process of individualized work with patients, psychologists pay attention to their psychological reactions to the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. Some patients may exhibit high levels of anxiety and fear, others may experience depression or a sense of loss of control. Depending on individual characteristics, psychologists develop individual psychological strategies and approaches for each patient [2].

In addition, an important aspect of the individual approach is taking into account the patient's personal resources and abilities for self-regulation and coping with stress. Some people may have specific psychological strategies, such as positive thinking or religious beliefs, that help them cope effectively with stress. Psychologists work with patients to identify their individual coping mechanisms and develop them to maintain a positive mental state [6].

Therefore, the individual approach to each patient is reflected in unique strategies and methods of psychological support and therapy aimed at meeting the specific needs and wishes of each client in the context of oncology treatment.

An important principle is to support the patient's autonomy and self-determination, which means respecting his right to self-determination and participation in the decision-making process regarding treatment and psychological help. The psychologist should encourage the patient's participation in the decision-making process regarding his treatment and psychological support, providing information and resources for independent decision-making. It is important that psychologists take into account the individual wishes and beliefs of each patient, observing the principle of confidentiality. Since many patients are unable or unwilling to make decisions about their health care, patient autonomy is often quite problematic [3].

In addition, the principle of confidentiality is an important component of psychological help in oncology. The psychologist must ensure the confidentiality of the information obtained in the process of consultation and therapy, providing the patient with confidence in the protection of his personal privacy. The high value placed on privacy has three sources: independence, respect for others, and trust. Independence refers to confidentiality in that personal information about a person belongs to him and should not be known to others without his consent. Privacy is also important because people deserve respect [1].

The principle of empathy and compassion is also important for effective psychological help. A psychologist must show understanding and compassion for the patient's emotional experiences, creating a safe environment for him to express his feelings and emotions [5].

A very important principle is also the therapeutic alliance - building a relationship of cooperation and trust between the psychologist and the patient. Creating a supportive and trusting relationship is key to a successful process of psychological assistance [1].

In addition, an important principle is the integration of psychological help into the general medical context of treatment. A psychologist must effectively cooperate with medical staff and other specialists to ensure a comprehensive approach to the treatment and support of the patient [2].

Another important aspect is transparency and truthfulness in interaction with patients. In some cases, an impasse or ethical dilemma may arise because certain issues are not addressed openly (intentionally or unintentionally) during patient care. It is important for the oncologist to be aware of whether there are topics that cannot be discussed openly during treatment. Thinking about them and about falsehood in the relationship between a specialist and a patient helps the doctor to find a way out of the impasse and to decide which medical or therapeutic interventions make sense in this situation [4].

A psycho-oncologist must provide information about the patient's condition, prognosis and possible treatment methods honestly and openly. It is important to avoid making false promises or underestimating possible risks so that the patient can make informed decisions about his treatment [3].

Research ethics in psycho-oncology is also important. Researchers must adhere to the principles of voluntariness and consent to participate in research, as well as ensure the confidentiality of data about research participants. It is also important to avoid any form of manipulation or harmful influence on the mental state of research participants [1].

In addition, ethics in psycho-oncology also means respect for cultural and ethnic characteristics of patients. Psychologists must be sensitive to different cultural contexts and traditions, adhering to the principles of cultural competence and safety of interaction [4]. Cultural and social values can influence the way patients understand their diagnosis and accept treatment. Psychologists try to understand these features and adapt their methods and approaches to the individual needs and preferences of each patient [2].

This principle notes the importance of understanding and respecting the patient's values, noting the difference between them and the personal values of the specialist. In some situations, it may happen that the oncologist reveals his own value orientations and does not

take into account the client's values and wishes. This principle also emphasizes the importance of how the patient understands and responds to the interventions discussed. Many therapists make the mistake of believing that clients automatically share their values and beliefs, although this is not always the case. The main task of an oncologist should be to study ethical principles, needs and values of the patient. This helps the practitioner understand the patient's expectations, whether they are conscious or not, about the treatment. Trying to understand the situation from the patient's point of view helps to avoid misunderstandings and promote the effectiveness of the treatment process.

Another specific ethical norm is to avoid physical contact with patients, except in situations provided for during medical care, and to refrain from social and professional relationships with patients that are not therapeutic.

Education and training for professionals in the field of psycho-oncology play an important role in the preparation of qualified specialists who are able to provide quality psychological support and assistance to cancer patients and their families. Since cancer has a significant psychological impact on patients, psycho-oncology professionals must have the appropriate knowledge and skills to work effectively with them.

One of the key aspects of education in the field of psycho-oncology is the acquisition by specialists of in-depth knowledge about the psychological aspects of oncology. This includes the study of psychological reactions of patients to the diagnosis, coping strategies with stress and anxiety, psychotherapeutic methods of working with cancer patients and their families, as well as ethical principles of interaction with them [1].

Under the outer shell of a calm, balanced person, inner preoccupation, wariness, or confusion may be hidden. Attention and understanding are required not only by those who have just fallen ill and are being examined. Patients who have completed radical treatment from the III clinical group also need it. They are practically healthy physically, but the state of their nervous system and psyche has a number of features:

- experienced the anxiety of the disease, fear of a possible diagnosis, hospitalization in an oncology hospital;
- underwent a major surgical intervention, radiation or complex treatment;
- they are concerned about the effectiveness of treatment (or for a long time?), the prospect of future disability, changes in social and family status.

Malignant diseases concern everyone. So, several dozen years ago, the population of rural and remote areas did not know the details about them, and the word "cancer" did not cause heavy feelings. Today, when the cultural level of the population is growing, everyone

knows about this disease and, unfortunately, exaggerate its danger. Now everyone should be afraid of the traumatic impact of the diagnosis. The difference is only in the strength and duration of the traumatic impact, in the nature of the reaction in response: in some, this reaction is clearly expressed and visible in alarmed and frightened eyes; in others, no reaction is noticeable in the external manifestation due to the ability to control oneself, due to a strong balanced type of higher nervous activity.

In addition, it is important that specialists in psycho-oncology have practical experience in working with cancer patients. Trainings and hands-on workshops provide an opportunity to interact with real patients, fostering the development of empathy, listening and collaboration skills. Such practical exercises help specialists better understand the needs and experiences of cancer patients and find effective approaches to their support [2].

Equally important is the integration of psychological and medical knowledge in the training of specialists in psycho-oncology. Since psycho-oncologists collaborate with medical staff and other specialists in the process of treating cancer patients, they must have an understanding of the medical aspects of cancer, as well as be able to interact with medical teams to achieve optimal treatment outcomes and patient support [6].

Also important is the ability to justify one's actions in the face of ethical dilemmas, and this is a skill that specialists in the field of oncology acquire during the acquisition of the profession. There are special models of learning how to solve ethical issues. The question of the balance of general principles and ethical norms remains relevant.

Pilot study

On the basis of the Kyiv City Clinical Cancer Center, we conducted a pilot study to determine the actual targets of psychological help.

30 patients with oncological diseases of women's health (breast cancer, cervical cancer, ovarian cancer, etc.) were selected for the study. The following psychodiagnostic methods were used in the study: to determine depressive and anxious tendencies - HADS, to determine types of response to cancer - mini M.A.C.

After conducting the survey, we received the following results:

According to the HADS questionnaire:

Table 1. HADS A results

| Severity of symptoms | Absolute number | Percentage ratio |
|---|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Within the limits of the norm | n=1 | 3% |
| Subclinically expressed symptoms of anxiety | n=9 | 30% |
| Clinically expressed symptoms of anxiety | n=20 | 67% |

Table 2. HADS D results

| Severity of symptoms | Absolute number | Percentage ratio |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Within the limits of the norm | n=5 | 16% |
| Subclinically expressed symptoms of depression | n=22 | 73% |
| Clinically expressed symptoms of depression | n=3 | 11% |

According to the mini M.A.C. questionnaire:

Table 3. mini M.A.C. results

| Model of admission to oncological illness | Absolute number | Percentage ratio |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Helplessness/Hopelessness | n=20 | 67% |
| Anxious Preoccupation | n=25 | 83% |
| Fighting Spirit | n=11 | 37% |
| Cognitive Avoidance | n=12 | 40% |
| Fatalism | n=5 | 17% |

Thus, we see a significant need for oncology patients in medical and psychological work and psychocorrection. The main aspects of the work will be anxiety, which most likely developed as a result of an oncological diagnosis. Also, the results showed high indicators of "Helplessness/Hopelessness" and "Anxious Preoccupation". These mechanisms of adjustment to the cancer diagnosis are not adaptive, and therefore reduce the patient's adaptation to the diagnosis and compliance with medical professionals.

Principles of relationships with cancer patients:

1. When working with such a patient, the doctor must be especially tactful, attentive, must support him, prepare him for the future treatment, instill optimism and faith in a positive result. At the same time, one cannot hide the seriousness of the disease, the complexity and duration of the future treatment, the need for a quick start of special treatment.

2. There are different approaches to the expediency of informing the patient of the diagnosis of a malignant neoplasm - from not disclosing the diagnosis to comprehensive information about the disease and the prognosis of the disease. In any case, the issue of rationally informing the patient should be resolved, while it is necessary to take into account individual psychological features, the level of intellectual development, attitude to the disease, the ability to adapt to negative information, as well as the stage of the disease. The principle of working with such patients: never to fool, at the same time, avoid mindless frankness. The truth should be dosed, such that it is gradually brought to the patient so that he has time to adapt to his diagnosis. At the same time, the doctor must feel how far the patient wants to go in realizing the truth. Do not give more information than is required by the patient.

3. Terminal patients require special attention. In common forms of tumors, active treatment measures are carried out to alleviate the patient's condition and maintain the highest possible level of quality of life. This is achieved with the help of drugs and special treatment methods (radiotherapy, palliative operations). At the same time, one cannot draw exaggerated prospects, but one cannot deprive the patient of hope for positive changes, while defining the nearest goal. With a depressive state in such patients, it is necessary to widely use psychopharmacological drugs.

Oncology professionals must adhere to the ethical standards of their country and their professional association, as well as be aware of the historical and sociocultural context of their practice, to ensure the safety and appropriate cancer treatment of their patients and to preserve the credibility of the oncology profession.

Conclusions

In general, ethical aspects in psycho-oncology are an integral part of professional practice and aim to ensure maximum support, safety and respect for the rights and dignity of each patient. No code of ethics can provide an unequivocal answer to what is right in specific situations, but it serves important functions. It serves as an important basis for decision-making and provides important information to oncologists, their patients and the public about the roles and responsibilities of oncology professionals. In addition, it promotes responsible psychological practice and protection of patients from inappropriate behavior of doctors, and

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