

Title: A study on the perceived psychosocial needs of the cancer patients presenting to Teaching Hospital Jaffna

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Objective: To identify the perceived psychosocial needs of cancer patients and to investigate the clinical and socio demographic characteristics associated with the needs.

Methods: This descriptive cross sectional study was conducted at Cancer Unit, Teaching Hospital, Jaffna during the period of March 14th to April 13th 2013. One hundred cancer patients investigated for psychosocial needs using an interviewer administered questionnaire.

Results: The needs, such as 'help in dealing the negative feelings' and the 'need of someone to share worries and feelings' were perceived by 53% and 68% of participants respectively. Twenty eight percent of participants only wanted formal counselling. Ninety one percent of patients were keen on correct information about the diagnosis, 71% wanted to know the treatment plan and 68% were interested in knowing the prognosis. Sixty six percent of patients were unable to manage the treatment related expenses. Patients aged less than 61 years and females were in higher need of someone to share worries and feelings (p= 0.047 and p=0.040 respectively) and formal counselling (p= 0.012 and p= 0.009 respectively).

Conclusion: The information gathered from this study should widen the awareness of increasing psychosocial needs of these patients among cancer care professionals and attempts should be made to address these issues.

Key words: Psychosocial needs, cancer, formal counselling.