

Factors Influencing Quality of Life among Family Caregivers of Patients with Advanced Cancer: A Causal Model

Warunee Meecharoen, Yupapin Sirapo-ngam, Supreeda Monkong, Pisamai Oratai, Laurel L. Northouse

Abstract: A decrease in the quality of life among family caregivers of advanced cancer patients negatively influences the quality of care provided. Thus, evaluating caregiver quality of life and related factors is very significant because it can guide nurses to maintain health status and ability of caregivers to provide caring for their loved one. This study, based on the Stress Process Model, examined causal relationships among caregiver's age, education, income, caregiver burden, family hardiness, coping, social support, and quality of life among family caregivers of patients with advanced cancer. A sample of 275 caregivers was recruited from two tertiary hospitals in the Central Region of Thailand. Data were collected via six questionnaires including a demographic data questionnaire, the *Zarit Burden Interview*, the *Family Hardiness Index*, the *Jalowiec Coping Scale*, the *Social Support Questionnaire*, and the *Ferrans and Powers Quality of Life Index Cancer Version-III* and analyzed through use of descriptive statistics and path analysis.

The final model of factors influencing quality of life among family caregivers of patients with advanced cancer fitted the empirical data and explained 45% of the variance in caregiver quality of life. The results also indicated caregiver age, social support and family hardiness had significant direct positive effects on caregiver quality of life; whereas, burden had a significant negative direct effect on this, and an indirect effect through social support and family hardiness. The findings suggest that nurses should develop a program focused on reducing burden, enhancing caregivers' support and family hardiness, and helping them to maintain their quality of life. However studies to evaluate this program are needed test this causal model in other populations in Thailand.

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Keywords: family caregiver; advanced cancer; quality of life; social support; caregiver burden, causal model.

Introduction

Cancer affects not only the quality of life (QOL) of patients who have the disease but also that of their family caregivers.^{1,2} Caregiving for advanced cancer is a demanding and overwhelming process that impacts all aspects of a caregiver's life.³ Family caregivers of patients with advanced cancer had poorer QOL than caregivers of the patients in the acute survivorship phase⁴ and caregivers are often unprepared to provide care for patients at home.⁵ They also receive only minimal attention from most healthcare providers

Correspondence to: Warunee Meecharoen, RN, PhD (Candidate) Ramathibodi School of Nursing, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand e-mail: warunee_mee@yahoo.com

Yupapin Sirapo-ngam, RN, DSN Associate Professor, Ramathibodi School of Nursing, Faculty of Medicine Ramathibodi Hospital, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand

Supreeda Monkong, RN, PhD Assistant Professor, Ramathibodi School of Nursing, Faculty of Medicine Ramathibodi Hospital, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand

Pisamai Oratai, RN, PhD Assistant Professor, Ramathibodi School of Nursing, Faculty of Medicine Ramathibodi Hospital, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand

Laurel L. Northouse, PhD, FAAN Professor, School of Nursing, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, the United States