

Diagnosis cancer – our soul suffers too!

Psychooncological therapy reduces psychological strain and improves quality of life for patients and members

The diagnosis cancer mostly touches patients and members to the quick and releases anxiety. The task of a psychooncologist is it to help the persons concerned to deal with the situation and accompany them through all phases of the disease.

Symptoms are among others depressive-anxious mood, listlessness, joylessness and adynamia as well as diminished appetite. Agitation, mental pressure and sleep disorders appear too.

The existential orientation can be influenced positively by continuous psychooncological support – a reasonable combination of psychotherapy and antidepressants. In addition to an initial exploration it is vital to establish a solid relationship between specialists (general practitioner, oncologist, psychiatrist) and patients which is based on mutual trust.

In psychooncology a psychopharmacological treatment is highly significant. For acceptance and compliance trust is of the utmost importance.

Cancer patients are particularly sensitized when it comes to pharmaceuticals. In general they are cynical about taking additional preparations. Therefore extensive education about effectiveness, possible side-effects, dose rates and duration of application becomes important. Especially the general practitioner is stipulated to point out that modern antidepressants (especially selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, SSRI) are absolutely necessary under given circumstances.

The new generation of antidepressants has only slight amounts of side-effects and is regarded as almost unrivaled. However, it can be reasonable to apply soporific antidepressants when sleep disorders appear. Tranquillizers do also make sense – temporarily (!) – if the patient is restless.

Conditionally there can be applied herbal substances (like the St. John's wort) against the "chemistry" if the depression appears in a milder form.

A fundamental factor is, as already mentioned, the psychotherapeutic support where the specialist has to understand the life situation of the person concerned. Here he/she also has to deal with the social and familial environment of the patient. Psychosocial management and support of the members is therefore also included.

The patient should have the possibility to communicate his/her enormous physical and psychical burdens. The therapist helps him/her to reduce the anxiety of an uncertain future.

For most of the patients this treatment is unpayable. It contributes to an active and hopeful exposure to the disease cancer.

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