



The Patient Dignity Inventory: applications in the oncology setting.

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Abstract:

The Patient Dignity Inventory (PDI) is a novel 25-item psychometric instrument, designed to identify multiple sources of distress (physical, functional, psychosocial, existential, and spiritual) commonly seen in patients who are terminally ill. It was also designed to help guide psychosocial clinicians in their work with patients. While its validity and reliability have been studied within the context of palliative care, its utility in clinical settings has not as yet been examined.

The purpose of this study was to determine how psychosocial oncology professionals would use the PDI within their practice and what utility it might have across the broad spectrum of cancer.

Between October 2008 and January 2009, psychosocial oncology clinicians from across Canada were invited to use the PDI to determine their impressions of this approach in identifying distress and informing their practice.

Ninety participants used the PDI and submitted a total of 429 feedback questionnaires detailing their experience with individual patients. In 76% of instances, the PDI revealed one or more previously unreported concerns; in 81% of instances, clinicians reported that the PDI facilitated their work. While it was used in a wide range of circumstances, clinicians were more inclined to apply the PDI to patients engaged in active treatment or palliation, rather than those in remission, having recently relapsed, or newly diagnosed. Besides its utility in identifying distress, the PDI enabled clinicians to provide more targeted therapeutic responses to areas of patient concern.

While this study suggests various clinical applications of the PDI, it also provides an ideal forerunner for research that will directly engage patients living with cancer.

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