



A specialist nurse-function in neurooncology: a qualitative study of possibilities, limitations, and pitfalls.

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Abstract:

OBJECTIVE: Brain tumors, a cancer that affects the cortical processes, have a substantial social impact. Typically, malignant glioma is a brain tumor with a poor prognosis; few patients survive more than two years after diagnosis. In the last several years, different groups have documented how this disease affects a patient's quality of life. These findings have resulted in new ways for nurses to improve the care for these patients and their spouses. However, these initiatives have not been studied in a systematic way. This study investigates how patients with malignant glioma and their families respond to a special nurse, a nurse specifically instructed to address the needs of the patient and the patient's family. **METHODS:** Sixteen patients and their next-of kin were included. At the time of diagnosis, the special nurse offered to serve as a resource to the patient and the patient's family. During the whole course of the disease, the nurse recorded her interactions with the patients and the patients' family. In addition, the spouses were interviewed after the patient's death. Data was analysed qualitatively with focus on tasks and relationships. **RESULTS:** Four relationships between the special nurse and the family were detected: 1) a resource for the whole family; 2) a parallel resource within the family; 3) a resource for the next-of kin; and 4) a resource for the patient. Most of the patients and their families found this program beneficial. The nurse provided the patient and family with several functions. In some cases the family and nurse interaction developed into a closer relationship, a relationship based on the nurse's availability and concern for the patient's and family's welfare. **SIGNIFICANCE OF RESULTS:** This close relationship underlines the importance of the nurse's professionalism and a systemic perspective for understanding the nurse's function within the milieu of a cancer patient's family.

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