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The glimmering embers: experiences of hope among cancer patients in palliative home care.

<https://arctichealth.org/en/permalink/ahliterature136705>

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Source: Palliat Support Care. 2011 Mar;9(1):43-54

Date: Mar-2011

Language: English

Publication Type: Article

Keywords: Adult
Home Care Services
Humans
Interviews as Topic
Morale
Neoplasms - psychology
Palliative Care - psychology
Sweden

Abstract: The experience of hope among cancer patients in palliative care is important information for healthcare providers, but research on the subject is sparse. The aim of this article was to explore how cancer patients admitted to palliative home care experienced the significance of hope and used hope during 6 weeks throughout the last phase of their life, and to assess their symptoms and hope status during 6 weeks throughout the last phase of their lives.

Eleven adult patients with cancer participated in 20 interviews and completed seven diaries. The participants were recruited from two palliative care units in the southeast of Sweden. The method used was Grounded Theory (GT), and analysis was based on the constant comparative method.

The core category, glimmering embers, was generated from four processes: (1) The creation of "convinced" hope, with a focus on positive events, formed in order to have something to look forward to; (2) The creation of "simulated hope," including awareness of the lack of realism, but including attempts to believe in unrealistic reasons for hope; (3) The collection of and maintaining of moments of hope, expressing a wish to "seize the day" and hold on to moments of joy and pleasure; and (4) "Gradually extinct" hope, characterized by a lack of energy and a sense of time running out.

The different processes of hope helped the patients to continue to live when they were close to death. Hope should be respected and understood by the professionals giving them support.

PubMed ID: 21352617 [View in PubMed](#) 