Living With Hepatocellular Carcinoma Near the End of Life: Family Caregivers’ Perspectives

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According to a National Alliance for Caregiving (2015) report, cancer was reported by 7% of caregivers as the main condition for which their recipient needed care. The experience of caregivers who provide care for patients with brain, breast, gynecologic, colorectal, and prostate cancer has been described in the literature (Fletcher, Miaskowski, Given, & Schumacher, 2012; Li, Mak, & Loke, 2013; Stamataki et al., 2014). Little is known about caregivers of patients with hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC). In the United States, HCC (about 75% of all primary liver cancers) can be defined as a rare cancer, with an estimated 30,000 new cases and 21,000 deaths each year (American Cancer Society [ACS], 2017; National Cancer Institute, 2017; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2016b; Houlihan, 2015). It is the fifth estimated cause of death in men and the eighth in women (ACS, 2017). The overall five-year survival is about 17.5% (National Cancer Institute, 2016b). A major contributing factor to HCC is liver cirrhosis caused by hepatitis C virus infection (CDC, 2016a, 2016b). During the next two decades, HCC mortality is predicted to increase due to nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (Vernon, Baranova, & Younossi, 2011).