Mutual Effects of Depression on Quality of Life in Patients and Family Caregivers

Li-Ting Huang, PhD, RN, and Susan C. McMillan, PhD, ARNP, FAAN

OBJECTIVES: To elucidate the importance of mutual effects within dyads by examining the contribution of depression on quality of life (QOL) in patients with advanced cancer and their family caregivers (FCs).

SAMPLE & SETTING: 716 patients with advanced cancer paired with their FCs at two large, private not-for-profit hospices.

METHODS & VARIABLES: A descriptive, cross-sectional design with the baseline data of a randomized hospice clinical trial was used. Structural equation modeling helped examine four hypotheses by integrating the features of the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model. Variables included QOL and depression.

RESULTS: Depression in patients with cancer and their FCs exhibited significant actor effects on an individual's QOL after controlling for the partner effects. Among the spousal pairs, depression in FCs exhibited a positive partner effect on the functional well-being of patients with cancer, indicating that depressive symptoms occurring in FCs may increase patients' functional well-being.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING: This study suggests the importance of consistent assessment in emotional well-being for dyads with cancer because their concerns may be transmitted to each other.

KEYWORDS: family caregivers; advanced cancer; depression; palliative care; quality of life

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