A Qualitative Systematic Review of the Experiences and Needs of Patients With Gliomas

Mengyuan Li, RN, BSN, Qian Shi, RN, BSN, Ling Yan, RN, MSN, Li Tian, RN, BSN, Haozheng Li, RN, BSN, Junshuai Lu, RN, BSN, and Shuqing Xiao, RN, BSN

Gliomas are the most common form of primary intracranial tumors, representing 81% of malignant brain tumors. Although relatively rare, gliomas are a life-threatening tumor, with five-year survival rates ranging from 0.05% to 4.7% (Ostrom et al., 2014). Gliomas differ from other types of brain tumors because of the high rate of recurrence (Felsberg et al., 2017) and the severe symptom burden caused by invasive growth into the surrounding brain tissue (Piil et al., 2019). Symptoms, which can vary depending on the tumor’s size, location, and classification (Hricik et al., 2011), can be physical (e.g., headaches, hemiparesis, aphasia, seizures), psychosocial (e.g., stress, anxiety, depression), or cognitive (e.g., personality changes, concentration problems, reduced attention span, short-term memory loss) (Piil et al., 2015). According to the World Health Organization’s grading of selected central nervous system tumors, gliomas can be divided into four grades based on their histology and isocitrate dehydrogenase status (Louis et al., 2016). Treatment for gliomas mainly includes surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, pharmacotherapy, and tumor treatment field therapy (National Comprehensive Cancer Network [NCCN], 2020).

Throughout disease progression and treatment, patients with gliomas can be highly affected by the diagnosis, various and increasingly severe symptoms (e.g., fatigue, aphasia, hemiplegia, headaches, reduced consciousness), and treatment complications (Flechl et al., 2013). Cognitive functioning can deteriorate as a result of gliomas, as well as from subsequent treatment by means of surgery, radiation therapy, or chemotherapy, with or without concomitant medication. In addition, patients often experience emotional distress (Klein et al., 2002; Taphoorn & Klein, 2004). Although results from previous studies vary, 21%–39% of patients with gliomas suffer from clinically significant symptoms of depression (Rooney et al., 2014;