

The Meaning of Hope for Women Diagnosed with Terminal Illness: A Literature Review

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Introduction

Hope is a complex and subjective concept and its’ impact during terminal illness is underreported in the literature. A thorough review of the literature was done to find resources that discussed hope and the meaning of hope during terminal illness, with particular attention to mention of women.

Search Process

- Electronic search of CINAHL, SCOPUS, and PsychInfo was conducted back to 2008.
- Initial search terms “hope”, “terminal illness”, and “women” produced 1 hit.
- Terms “hope”, “terminal illness”, “qualitative”, “English language”, and “peer reviewed” revealed 9 articles.
- Metasyntheses, seminal works, and other literature reviews included.
- Articles focused on parents, pediatrics, and sick but not terminally ill excluded, which left 3 articles from the CINAHL search.
- SCOPUS using the terms “terminal illness” AND “hope” back to 2008.
- Limited number of US articles became apparent.
- PsychInfo scanned for duplicative results, overarching findings, and included unique articles were utilized.
- Reference lists of the selected articles were scanned for pertinence and added to the review.

Gaps in Literature

- Little available information or research on hope in the literature.
- Not clearly known how hope impacts end of life processes in terminally ill women.
- Paucity of US articles on the subject.
- If nurse scientists can understand what gives terminally ill women hope, we can optimize quality of care during end-of-life.

Integrative Review of Relevant Literature

- Healthcare advances and increased longevity (despite complex diagnoses) have changed trajectories for many patients, however end of life remains a perplexing time (NINR, n.d.).
- A diagnosis of terminal illness is devastating physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally for women and their Families (Broadhurst, 2016).
- NINR supports the research endeavors of nurse scientists striving to improve comfort and reduce symptoms of advancing illness for patients and to guide them through end of life processes (n.d.).

Provision 1 of the ANA Code of Ethics says the nurse shall practice with compassion and respect for the inherent dignity, uniqueness, and worth of every person (ANA, 2015). This includes caring for the living as well as the dying, with the utmost respect and sensitivity.

Importance of HOPE repeated in the literature:

*Hope for Pain relief
*Hope for cure
*Hope for treatment/provider input
*Hope to add meaning to life
*Hope for future

- Women live an average of four years longer than men (WHO, 2013).
- The average life expectancy was more than 80 years of age in 46 countries (WHO, 2013).
- In the US the top three leading causes of female death in all races and age groups combined were: (a) heart disease, (b) cancer, and (c) chronic lower respiratory disease (CDC, 2017).

“Hope is an adjective, a noun, and a verb. It involves trust, is related to goal attainment, and provides meaning and direction, especially when hopelessness can lead to death. Hockley defined hope as an active process that is more than just expectation”(as cited in Subramoney, 2015).