The Embodied Situations Associated with Attacks of Acute Dyspnea Symptoms in Patients with Moderate to Severe Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

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Purpose

This study aimed to investigate embodied situations associated with attacks of acute dyspnea symptoms in patients with moderate to severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and it was conducted by the phenomenological method. This study were 15 patients recruit from a medical center in Southern Taiwan.

Method

The content of all the interviews conducted by the researcher were verbatim transcribed into process recording. The data were analyzed by Colaizzi’s (1978) content analysis.

Background

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is an incompletely reversible and progressive disease, whose symptoms develop slowly. COPD is characterized by the condition that continuous limitation of the airflow in the lungs and occurrence of acute symptoms exceed normal daily changes (Wang, Haugen, Steihaug, & Werner, 2012; Alison, 2014). Inability to breathe is a horrible experience, yet patients suffering from COPD have to face it every day. In addition to limitation of daily labor activities and working capacity commonly seen by the author during the clinic work, COPD patients have to be rushed to emergency treatments and hospitalization, fearing that the life will come to an end. Shortness of breath is unpredictable and could swiftly turn into acute conditions, suggesting that shortness of breath significantly affects COPD patients.

Result

The results of the data analysis, the embodied situations were summarized as follows. (1) Embodied expression during dyspnea attacks: The body exhibits yearning for the air and powerlessness and manifests shortness of breath and a feeling of smothering as well as the fear of tumbling on the verge of death. (2) Physical temporal disorder: The body is in disorder and the control over physiological time is lost in both visible and invisible situations. (3) The body’s attempts to corrective and soothing: The body tries to correct breathing to regain balance and take response actions against encountered threats.

Table 1: Themes and Sub-themes of The Embodied Situations Associated with Attacks of Acute Dyspnea Symptoms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes/Sub-themes</th>
<th>Descriptions of the body in respiratory distress</th>
<th>Disordered body and time</th>
<th>The body attempts to adjust and measures of comfort</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. The body gasps for air powerlessly</td>
<td>1. Observable and unobservable body condition</td>
<td>1. The body attempts to adjust breathing and reach a balance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Shortness of breath and sense of suffocation</td>
<td>2. Disordered body and lost control of biological rhythm</td>
<td>2. The body takes responsive measures to threat</td>
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<td>3. A fear resembling a fall to the brink of death</td>
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Conclusion

The results indicate that COPD may have prolonged trajectories that run through the entire life. This study may provide nursing staffs with a reference to identify acute dyspnea attacks and care the COPD patients.