I Want My Mommy: Siblings' Experiences With Childhood Cancer

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Outline

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Introduction

- In Taiwan approximately 550 children are diagnosed as cancer each year (Childhood cancer foundation of Taiwan, 2011)
- Parents and other family members are busily involved with the ill child's care and children complained of not getting parental attention.
- Siblings have also been reported to experience feelings of deprivation, displacement, anger, loneliness, isolation and injustice (Sloper & White, 1996; Kramer, 1984; Tritt & Esses, 1988).
Purpose

- Aims to identify and describe the adaptive behaviors of children who have a sibling with cancer.
Research Design

- Qualitative study using phenomenology approaches was conducted at a medical center of northern Taiwan.

- Semi-structured interview

- Open-ended question
Participants

- Healthy sibling of children who was treated for cancer at the pediatric hematology/oncology clinics at major hospitals in North Taiwan.

- Purposive and snowball sampling methods were applied to recruit subjects from November, 2009 to April, 2010.

- **Four** healthy siblings aged **5 to 14 years old**
## Participants

Table 1 *Demographics of The Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ill child’s Diagnosis</th>
<th>Sibling/Cancer child</th>
<th>Caregiver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia</td>
<td>Elder brother/sister</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Lymphoma</td>
<td>Elder brother/sister</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lymphoma</td>
<td>Elder sister/sister</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lymphoma</td>
<td>Elder brother/sister</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Instruments

- Researcher self
- Semi-structured interview guideline
- Recorder
- Drawing papers and pens
Data Collection

- Performed by the first author
- Face to face, open-ended individual interviews
- 30 to 90 minutes, with the younger children usually taking part in shorter interviews
- Tape recorded
- Field notes
Data Analysis

- Transcribed verbatim
- Colaizzi’s (1978) analysis guidelines
- Nvivo 8.0 qualitative software
Results-1/5

Main Themes:

- Encountering the impacts of sibling with cancer
- Inevitable changes
- Mood fluctuation
- Reconstruction of family life
Results

Theme 1: Encountering the impact of sibling with cancer

"I remembered the day I came back from school, my father told me that my sister is sick then she and mama had hospitalized."

“I do not like her staying in the hospital, cause mother will be there, too. Father have to go to work all day long even in the night, I have to stay alone. I want them at home, it is more fun.”

The siblings noted experiencing psychological disruptions and isolation from their family members.
Results 3/5

- **Theme 2: Inevitable changes**
- “When my sister was hospitalized, I hope mommy can ask someone else to take care of my sister and then my mom could stay home with me. But...that’s impossible.”

  “I talked to my mommy by cellphone so I can image that she is staying with me everyday.”

  Siblings feel the life change, loss of balance situation and mother is no longer belong to them.
• **Theme 3: Mood fluctuation in daily life**

“When she was sick, they treated her much better then before and always take care of her. I want mommy taking care about me, too.”

“Why they treat different! I usually protest but overrule, they always told that I am her brother I have to take care of her, I feel sad and cried. It is unfair!”

Internalised feelings of anxiety, anger, jealousy and loneliness can be ventilated and worries and they always thought unfair.
Results

- Theme 4: Reconstruction of the family life

“I saw her got treatment and had read a book; it talked about cancer child’s experience in the hospital. I understood that she got the most difficult disease. I felt she was so brave. After that, I stay at hospital after school everyday for few hours, being with her and being with my mother and father.”

Siblings’ increased desire to maintain a sense of presence within their family and made them feel closer to their mother.
Discussion

- Parents become highly distressed and their need to attend to the ill child at the hospital or at home may make them physically and emotionally unable to fully attend to the needs of their healthy children.

- Not only did the siblings experience a loss of family life, but also had a diminished sense of self and importance within the family.
Conclusion

- This sibling’s lived experience with childhood cancer has shown the effects of this event on the child.

- Health care professionals have to help both the siblings’ and ill children’s needs and wishes. Maintain sibling’s sense of presence around those significant in their lives.
Thank You for Your Attention.