



In what ways does a siblings cancer diagnosis affect college students?

Literature Review

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Introduction

There has been a lot of research done over the years on how cancer affects the patients emotional wellbeing. Just recently though there has been a trend to focus the research on how the siblings of patients feel emotionally. Siblings deal with the same level of stress if not more than their brother or sister with cancer. That is why they need the same amount of support during a cancer diagnosis as the actual patient. We need to understand the siblings emotional state if we are to take a holistic palliative care approach. The goal of this paper is to take a look at the psychological outcomes of cancer on siblings, how it impacts their emotional and social development, how emotional peer support helps and how they deal with their siblings death.

Coverage

To conduct my research over this topic I used the following key terms:

- Cancer
- Siblings
- Hospital
- Mental well-being

I entered those key terms into these search engines:

- Google scholar
- Tech Library



Figure 1. Brother supporting his brother who is battling cancer

Methodology

I used the method of a literature review to conduct my studies on my topic of how a cancer diagnosis affects a sibling.

"A literature review is a written document that presents a logically argued case founded on a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge about a topic of study."

The steps to conduct a successful literature review are:

1. Develop search terms
2. Search using terms
3. Identify initial primary sources on the topic
4. Read abstracts (and possibly additional sections of the article) to narrow sources if needed
5. Summarize in paragraph form important information from each source; include citation
6. Create a thematically focused table of summarized information
7. Prepare for first draft by identifying an organizational approach and writing strategy
8. Write the first draft
9. Edit, proof, and polish (repeatedly)

*source Research methods in Criminal Justice and Criminology by Rennison and Hart

Significance

Children are very unique in how they process information and how they cope with unknown situations that scare them; this is why we need to study siblings in healthcare setting. This information will help child life specialists in the hospital by letting them know areas to pay close attention to with siblings and how they can best support them.



Figure 2. Child Life Specialist engaging in medical play with siblings.



Figure 3. Family with a daughter who is fighting cancer

Results

Siblings who have a brother or sister with cancer have some severe adverse outcomes from this event. I have listed some of those adverse effects on siblings below:

Psychological Outcomes

- Siblings suffer post traumatic growth after their brother or sisters cancer diagnosis
- Siblings can be in a constant state of stress
- Siblings can regress

Social and Emotional Impact

- Less time is spent on extracurricular and building on peer relationships
- Siblings have a bigger desire to be with their sick brother or sister
 - negatively affecting their school performance

Siblings understanding of death

- Feel isolated and confused since parents are grieving

Conclusions

These findings mean that medical workers should focus on the whole family not just the patient; they need to implement palliative care. This would help siblings in so many ways such as:

- Eliminating the feelings of isolation
- Help them to continue growing in a developmentally appropriate way
- Help educate them and make them feel included in the process

Future studies should focus on the mental well-being of siblings and track their growth years after their siblings cancer diagnosis to really get a bigger picture of how siblings cope and process.

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