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Sexual problems in gynecological cancers and nursing approaches

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Cancer affects the quality of life in many psychological, social and physical dimensions and the most important issue after survival in cancer patients with improved and successful treatment options is to improve the quality of life. Cancer diagnosis and treatment affects every aspect of life, relationships and connections as well as sexuality. It is known that 40-100% of cancer patients have sexual problems. It has been determined that genitourinary system, breast and lung cancer have the most negative effects on sexual life among all cancer types. The results from various studies emphasize that each step of the sexual response cycle has the potential to be affected by gynecological cancers and their treatment. Many studies emphasize the negative effects on women experience in sexual desire / arousal, wetting and orgasm in gynecologic cancers. Factors causing sexual dysfunction in women with gynecological cancer are physical problems, psychological problems and communication problems between couples due to applied treatments (surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy) and side effects. Gynecological cancers result in alterations in the levels of hormones that are dependent on treatment, and loss of body organs such as uterus, tubes, ovaries, cervix, and pelvic nerve damage. Chemotherapy can cause temporary limitations in physical such as fatigue and nausea and vomiting and cause to body image disorder by hair loss. Cancer patients often experience fear of death, changes in unwanted role in their lives, decreased sense of control, decreased self-esteem, performance anxiety, decreased self-esteem, hopelessness, worthlessness, a changing body sensation, sleep and appetite changes, reduced energy, guilt, repetitive thoughts, and abandonment live in fear. All these losses and feelings can limit the ability to enjoy sexual pleasure and decrease sexual desire. It is necessary for the nurse to care the gynecologic cancer patient with a holistic approach. Nurses should be aware their personal values and beliefs on sexuality for not being obstacles in dealing with problems which is an important issue for women with gynecological cancer. In addition, patients with different cultural backgrounds need to be culturally sensitive interviews. Psycho-education and counseling can be done for sexual problems after gynecological cancers. The sexual problems experienced in gynecological cancers and appropriate nursing approaches are discussed.

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