

Factors Affecting Quality of Life for Korean American Cancer Survivors: An Integrative Review

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No financial relationships to disclose.

Yoon, Chatters, Kao, Saint-Arnault, and Northouse contributed to the conceptualization and design. Yoon completed the data collection and provided the statistical support. Yoon, Chatters, Kao, and Northouse contributed to the analysis. Yoon, Chatters, Kao, Saint-Arnault, and Northouse contributed to the manuscript preparation.

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Submitted July 2015. Accepted for publication December 12, 2015.

Key words: Korean American; quality of life; cancer; integrative review

ONF, 43(3), E132–E142.

doi: 10.1188/16.ONF.E132-E142

Problem Identification: Understanding of Korean American cancer survivors' quality of life (QOL) within a cultural context is limited. This article examines factors associated with the QOL of Korean American cancer survivors.

Literature Search: A systematic literature search was conducted of PubMed, CINAHL®, Google Scholar, and EBSCO databases from January 2000 to January 2014.

Data Evaluation: The studies were assessed for the relevance to the purpose of the review. Each study was rated on a two-point scale using an 11-item quality criteria checklist.

Synthesis: The 13 studies that met the criteria for inclusion included 7 descriptive, 5 qualitative, and 1 mixed-method.

Conclusions: Social support, communication, and acculturation were key factors associated with Korean Americans' QOL. Cultural differences were evident for Korean Americans versus other Asian American ethnic groups.

Implications for Practice: More innovative and culturally driven research is needed to understand each minority group's cultural barriers, as well as to improve cancer survivors' QOL. Improving the doctor–patient relationship is critical to promoting better cancer experiences for Korean American cancer survivors.

The size of the Asian American population living in the United States is projected to increase by 132% and will comprise 9% of the total U.S. population by 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Compared to Caucasians, African Americans, and Hispanics, Asian Americans have distinctive profiles for leading causes of death. Cancer is the leading cause of death for Asian Americans (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013). Specific information on Asian American subgroups indicates that Korean Americans have the highest cancer mortality rates (Kwong, Chen, Snipes, Bal, & Wright, 2005) and the lowest breast and colorectal cancer screening rates (Lee, Ju, Vang, & Lundquist, 2010; Lee, Lundquist, Ju, Luo, & Townsend, 2011; Maxwell, Crespi, Antonio, & Lu, 2010). Korean American men (55 per 100,000) and women (28 per 100,000) have the highest incidence of stomach cancer compared to other Asian subgroups, which is five times higher than rates for non-Hispanic Caucasian men and seven times higher than rates for non-Hispanic Caucasian women (McCracken et al., 2007). Korean American women have the highest incidence and mortality rates for liver cancer compared to other Asian American subgroups, and Korean American men have the second highest incidence and mortality rates for liver and colorectal cancer (McCracken et al., 2007). Given the high incidence of cancer among Korean Americans and the dramatic increase in the percentage of Korean Americans (33%) living in the United States since 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), oncology professionals likely will be caring for