

The Experience of Filipino American Patients With Cancer

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Purpose/Objectives: To explore the experience of Filipino patients with cancer.

Research Approach: Hermeneutic phenomenologic inquiry using focus groups.

Setting: A comprehensive cancer center in the southeastern United States.

Participants: 18 female and 5 male Filipino patients aged 34–78 years who had received cancer treatment.

Methodologic Approach: Seven focus groups, each lasting two hours, were conducted; each participant attended one focus group. Discussions were audiotaped, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using phenomenologic analysis techniques.

Findings: Three main themes emerged: support of the family, perception of symptoms, and communication preferences.

Conclusions: Important cultural needs of Filipino patients with cancer as well as strategies to provide more culturally competent care were identified.

Interpretation: Nursing strategies important to the Filipino patients with cancer were including family when planning and delivering care, assessing symptoms with open-ended questions, frequently asking patients how they are doing, using gentle nondirect communication, and smiling. Culturally specific information should be included in nursing education. More research needs to be done with Filipino patients with cancer.

In 2003, Asian American and Pacific Islanders represented 25% of the non-native U.S. population (Larsen, 2004), with Filipinos constituting the second-largest portion of that group (Gong, Gage, & Tacata, 2003). In 2000, more than 1.8 million Filipinos were living in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Nevertheless, Filipinos have expressed that they feel like the “hidden majority” and that their culture is not widely represented in the United States (Roley, 2001). For example, Filipinos rarely are represented in the media and Filipino food has not been integrated into society in the same way as Chinese and Thai food.

Scant research has addressed the health status of Filipinos in the United States (Dela Cruz, McBride, Compas, Calixto, & Van Derveer, 2002), and no research has described Filipino patients’ experience with cancer. The highest incidence of cancer in Filipino women by site is breast (73%), colorectal (21%), and lung (18%). In men, the highest cancer incidence by site is prostate (70%), lung (53%), and colorectal (35%). Mortality rates are higher in Filipinos than in Caucasians for cancers of the liver, intrahepatic bile duct, stomach (men

Key Points . . .

- ▶ Healthcare experience, symptom expression, and communication can be influenced by culture. Understanding culturally appropriate care can assist nurses in assessing and implementing care that meets patients’ needs.
- ▶ Filipino patients in this study preferred indirect communication, liked to be asked how they were feeling, and preferred that their families be included in planning and delivering their care.
- ▶ With information about the experience of Filipino patients with cancer in the United States, nurses are better able to provide appropriate care, educators are better able to teach students about working with this population, and researchers can conduct further research.

and women), thyroid (women), and the nasopharynx (men) (Ishida, 2001). As a result, the present study was conducted to describe the experience of Filipino patients with cancer and provide information to assist nurses in delivering culturally appropriate care to this understudied population.

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