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PROGRAMME AND ABSTRACTS

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&

**The Sri Lanka College of Oncologists
Annual Academic Sessions**

"Converting Adversity to
Opportunity"

Coping with Cancer Pain: A Qualitative Study to Recognize Self-Coping Strategies of Cancer Patients Attending Apeksha Hospital, Sri Lanka

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Introduction

Pain is one of the most debilitating symptoms of cancer, substantially diminishing one's quality of life. The level of pain experienced is eventually determined by the pain-coping strategies adopted by patients. The awareness of 'self-coping methods' of individual patients is beneficial for the multidisciplinary team to integrate such methods when planning future interventions to manage pain. This research aims to explore the pain-coping strategies utilized by cancer patients in Sri Lanka.

Methods:

Purposively selected patients with cancer pain from Apeksha Hospital, Maharagama, participated in a qualitative study. Eighteen years and older with cancer-related pain were recruited. Noncancerous pain and those with psychological disorders, and brain metastases were excluded. Twenty-one semi-structured interviews were conducted each lasting 30-60 minutes. Data were analyzed by Graneheim and Lundman's content analysis method. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics review committee, Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

Results:

Most participants were in the 51 to 60-year age category and Sinhalese Buddhists. Five sub-themes emerged under the central theme of 'coping strategies, namely self-control, spiritual support, finding support, use of alternative treatment methods, and lifestyle adjustments.

Conclusion

The study revealed the use of self-devised coping strategies to obtain relief from cancer pain and associated suffering with reported positive outcomes. Multidimensional strategies were chosen, centered around individuals' culture, religion, and spiritual beliefs, and adapted within the limits of underlying health status to enable progress in life. Stakeholders of multidisciplinary pain teams may consider incorporating and strengthening the same strategies in future treatment plans to improve better outcomes.