

PP 93

A study on level of psychological stress and associated factors among post-operative cancer patients in Kandy District, Sri Lanka

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Background: Cancer is a broad term for a category of diseases characterized by abnormal cells that grow and invade healthy cells in the body which can affect physical, mental, and social aspects of an individual. The impact of psychological distress on heterogeneous cancer patients in Sri Lanka is largely unknown.

Objective: To assess the level of psychological stress and associated factors in post-operative cancer patients.

Method: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted in the post-operative oncology unit, National hospital, Kandy, Sri Lanka. One hundred and six, post-operative patients with cancer were assessed by using a self-administered, pre-tested standard scale (GHQ 12). A convenience sampling technique was used and descriptive analysis was performed using SPSS version 22.0.

Results: Of the sample (n=106), most of the participants were males (55.2%) and belonged to the age category 39-59 years (50.5%). Most of the participants 43.8% (n=46) were educated up to G.C.E O/L and the majority of them (65.7%) were unemployed. Nearly (51.4%) had scored 13-24 (out of a total GHQ 12 score of 36) and belonged to the mild stress category. Only 16.2% (n=17) were categorized as ‘no distress’ (Score 0-12) while 32% of the patients were having moderate to severe stress levels (Score 25-36). A positive, significant correlation was identified between patients’ stress level and age ($p=0.037$). Level of psychological stress increased with the age.

Conclusion: It is evident that the majority of the participants were either suffering from mild stress, or moderate to severe stress levels, which increased with age.