

REVIEWS

Dissertation on the topic: Locus of control, coping mechanisms and quality of life in patients with bladder carcinoma

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The dissertation is in the most complex field of medicine and clinical psychology - oncological disease in the field of the excretory and sexual system in men and women, which provokes long intense feelings of horror, fear, shame, guilt, doom. Anita Milusheva has good training and practice of a clinical psychologist in this field, courage to assist patients and skills in conducting psychodiagnostic assessments. The dissertation is spread over four main chapters on 194 pages, citing 309 literary sources in Cyrillic and Latin, mostly from the last two decades.

The first chapter presents a rich overview of theoretical concepts of locus of control, coping mechanisms, quality of life, psychosomatics and psycho-oncology. Here the doctoral student shows very good knowledge, excellent skills to analyze and systematize theoretical concepts of many authors, to connect medical and psychological aspects, to express her own position and make important for the dissertation. Contemporary views and research data from many authors on the psychosomatic aspects of alexithymia, such as trait and personality status in oncological diseases, kidney failure, autoimmune, nutritional disorders and addictions, are presented. Specific neurobiological characteristics and genetic predisposition, the specifics of parenting behavior, and harmful living conditions that capture this trait as a personality trait are discussed. The doctoral student also made a second part of the literature review on the localization, stages of disease in bladder cancer in men. Here, the medical part is extremely extensive, with many details of symptoms, disease syndromes, stages, operative and postoperative problems of treatment, types of interventions, chemo and radiation therapy.

The third chapter of the dissertation is the organization of the research. The purpose, research and organizational tasks and hypotheses, criteria for inclusion in the research are very good. A pilot study was conducted in 20 patients and a core

group of 132 patients, men and women, were diagnosed with bladder cancer. The test battery is relevant to the purpose and objectives, includes three methodologies that are standardized for the Bulgarian population: Questionnaire for localization of control, (J. Rotter), Test for study of coping mechanisms (R. Lazarus and S. Folkman) and Scala Measurement of Life Satisfaction with Time (TSWLS) (William Pavot, Ed Diner, Eunkuk Dry).

Chapter four presents the research data in detail. Dependencies on specific and complex statistical analyzes are derived in a good logical sequence, clinical and psychological interpretations are made to each hypothesis and summaries, and a comparison of the pilot and full research data is made continuously. I will present some of the essential analyzes and interpretations. Milusheva concludes that gender influences the locus of control. Men have a more pronounced internal locus of control, which increases with age, unlike women. In patients with bladder cancer, the internal locus of control, most pronounced at an advanced age, also dominates. In women, the external locus of control with maladaptive coping is expressed - avoidance, confrontation, impaired self-control. The PhD student very well interprets that "the women in the study group expect someone else to reassure them, give them courage and strength, that they will manage and take responsibility for them. Women believe that they cannot cope with the stressful situation of the disease themselves and prefer to avoid the "fight" mode in the crisis situation. " For men, borderline coping is most pronounced: confrontation and distance, taking responsibility by closing and not sharing problems with loved ones. Milusheva well interprets that "it is this closure in itself that leads to the highest rate of coping confrontation, as well as the transition from an adaptive variant to a borderline, and later to a maladaptive one. Suppressed mental and emotional tension leads to intense frustration and anger that comes in the form of confrontation. From here, the doctoral student motivates the need for "psychological counseling" and "social support". In the study groups, no gender differences were deduced from the analyzes, but at a young age women were more vulnerable and men at maturity, which again necessitated psychological counseling. The summarized data clearly outline the coping mechanisms of young age maladaptation and adaptive late age coping combined with life experience but with growing health problems. Aggregated data indicate a high percentage of life satisfaction before cancer. At the same time, during the disease period, this satisfaction drops sharply, and dissatisfaction increases. The doctoral student analyzes as the leading factors of dissatisfaction the "shock of the oncological diagnosis", after which the dysfunctional beliefs and negative emotional

experiences are activated. There is a tendency of higher dissatisfaction among women than men. These trends from Milusheva's personal therapeutic experience are interpreted very thoroughly, where she compares the specifics of the more sensitive emotionality in women, their social roles, altruistic attitudes, individual traumatic experiences and losses suffered. She rightly states that patients here need crisis intervention, psychotherapeutic treatment of the trauma of the disease and emotional support. In the observed dynamics of psychological change, recovery of satisfaction and quality of life in effective medical and psychotherapeutic treatment has been reported. A psychological interpretation was also made for the group of men, showing their high possibilities for detailed analyzes of the specific situation of the disease, inhibited experiences of strong emotions in order to protect close and individual behavioral strategies for dealing with stress. Detailed analyzes and comparisons have been made of life satisfaction and locus of control. In summary, at the internal control locus, satisfaction is higher than external and there is a chance of recovery with effective treatment and psychotherapy.

Comparison is also made with life satisfaction over time and coping mechanisms. Here again, satisfaction falls with the manifestation of the disease and recovers from the effectiveness of the healing process. From the detailed analysis, the doctoral student states that "people who have been satisfied in the past expect in the future to cope with this difficulty in their lives, and those who were not satisfied expect to remain dissatisfied." Milusheva categorically emphasizes that the prognosis is always individual, tied to the resource for dealing with personality, resilience and fitness to process injuries.

In the final part of the thesis the main conclusions, the confirmed and rejected hypotheses are systematized. The conclusion clearly outlines the scientific and practical analysis of the impact of the locus of control and coping mechanisms on quality of life in patients with bladder cancer. The need for psychotherapy work programs to accompany the healing process was presented and motivated. The abstract reflects the important parts of the dissertation. The seven main theoretical and practical contributions presented are relevant to scientifically based analyzes and generalized interpretations. As a matter of fact, I have no critical comments on the final version, all the recommendations made in the preliminary review are consistent.

In conclusion, I think that Anita Milusheva's dissertation is finally completed, covers the high criteria for a doctoral degree and reflects her specialized professional skills as a clinical psychologist and researcher! Special Admiralty deserves the team of scientific guidance and consulting from Prof. Vanya Matanova, DSc and Prof. Dr. Krasimir Neikov, PhD!

I suggest the members of the Scientific Jury to vote for Anita Milusheva the educational and scientific degree "Doctor of Psychology, Clinical Psychology"

03/15/2018

Reviewer:

Sofia