Fear of progression in Chinese cancer patients: Prevalence, and correlations with self-compassion, and sense of coherence

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INTRODUCTION

Fear of progression (FoP) is a common psychosocial problem among adult cancer patients[1]. With development of positive psychology, researchers have begun to explore the factors that promote patients' physical and psychological well-being. Self-compassion is a protective factor for individual mental health[2]. Self-compassion can be used as a psychological resource to alleviate psychological symptoms including depression, anxiety, and stress[3]. Sense of coherence is a general, persistent and dynamic confidence held by an individual in the face of internal and external environmental stress[4]. However, it remains unclear whether self-compassion and sense of coherence may be potential protective factors against FoP in adult cancer patients.

OBJECTIVE

This study aimed to examine the prevalence of FoP in adult cancer patients and explore the association among FoP, self-compassion, and sense of coherence.

METHODS

This cross-sectional study was conducted in cancer patients undergoing anti-tumor therapy between January and May 2023. Participants were recruited from the department of oncology, Shenzhen People's Hospital (The Second Clinical Medical College, Jinan University; The First Affiliated Hospital, Southern University of Science and Technology), China. A total of 127 adult cancer patients were recruited. FoP in the patients was assessed using the Chinese version of the Fear of Progression Questionnaire-short form (FoP-Q-SF)[5]. self-compassion and sense of coherence were measured by the Chinese version of Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) [6] and Sense of Coherence-13 (SOC-13) [4], respectively. Pearson correlation analysis and multiple linear regression analysis were used to identify the association among FoP, self-compassion, and sense of coherence.

References:
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RESULTS

A total of 36.2% of the participants showed dysfunctional levels of FoP. The mean FoP-Q-SF score was 31.49 (standard deviation = 10.06). Spearman correlation analysis showed that FoP was negatively associated with self-compassion (r = - 0.617, P < 0.01) and sense of coherence (r = - 0.439, P < 0.01). Multiple linear regression analysis showed that FoP was significantly associated with self-compassion, and sense of coherence (Adjusted R Squared = 0.394, F = 42.014, P < 0.01).

TABLE 1 Socio-demographic and medical characteristics of the participants (*N* = 127)

Variable	*N* (%)
Age in years (M ± SD)	45.27±7.89
Gender	
Male	34(26.8)
Female	93(73.2)
Educational level	
Junior high school or lower	26(20.5)
Senior high school	34(26.8)
College or higher	67(52.7)
Diagnosis	
Gastric cancer	10(7.9)
Colorectal cancer	33(26.0)
Lung cancer	4(3.1)
Breast cancer	52(40.9)
Ovarian cancer	9(7.1)
Other types of cancer	19(15.0)

TABLE 2 Correlation between self-compassion, sense of coherence, and fear of progression

Variable	*M ± SD*	1	2	3
1.Fear of progression (FoP-Q-SF)	31.49±10.06	-		
2.Self-compassion (SCS)	20.83±3.41	-0.617**	-	
3. Sense of coherence (SOC-13)	63.96±11.67	-0.439**	-0.496**	-

** P<0.01

TABLE 3 Multiple linear regression analysis of the factors associated with fear of progression in cancer patients

Variable	*B*	*SE*	*β*	*t*	*P*
Constant	73.738	4.743		15.546	< 0.001
Self-compassion (SCS)	-1.559	0.235	-0.529	-6.622	< 0.001
Sense of coherence (SOC-13)	-0.153	0.069	-0.177	-2.219	0.028

Note: R^2 = 0.404 (Adjusted R^2 = 0.394), F = 42.014, P < 0.001

CONCLUSIONS

FoP in cancer patients is closely related to self-compassion and sense of coherence. Healthcare professionals could develop effective measures to reduce the level of fear of disease progression in cancer patients from the perspective of improving self-compassion and sense of coherence in cancer patients, eventually to improve the psychological adaptability of patients during cancer treatment.

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