Living life in the face of loss: parenteral nutrition in ovarian cancer patients in bowel obstruction

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Rationale

- Malignant bowel obstruction is a complication of advanced ovarian cancer
- These patients may receive home parenteral nutrition (PN)
- This research investigated:
  - The experiences of women and their family caregivers of home PN
  - Patient nutritional status and survival

Methods

- 38 women with ovarian cancer and inoperable bowel obstruction admitted to a cancer hospital between October 2016 and December 2017 were included.
- Patient characteristics and survival data were collected from medical records. Body composition was measured using computed tomography scans.
- 62 longitudinal in-depth interviews with 20 women and 15 family caregivers.
- Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically influenced by the techniques of Van Manen1 using NVivo 10.
- Data were read and re-read allowing themes and subthemes to emerge inductively from the data.
- Anonymous quotations have been used to illustrate each theme and give an overview of the data.

Study timeline – Patients & family caregivers

Patient start PN

Interview on ward

Interview 4 – 7 weeks at home

Interview 10 – 15 weeks at home

Interview 8 – 11 months at home

Results

Patient characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean age N = 38</th>
<th>67 years (SD7.5)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage at diagnosis N = 38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean fat mass n= 33</td>
<td>21 kg (SD 5.86)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean muscle mass n = 33</td>
<td>31 kg (SD 2.86)</td>
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Patient outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Median survival n = 38</th>
<th>70 days (range 8 – 506)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Median time on home PN n = 17</td>
<td>91 days ( range 6 – 441)</td>
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Gains

- Survival
  - “If I wasn’t on this, I wouldn’t be here.”
  - “This is important, this is my lifeline”
- Quality of life
  - Improved as patients could fed at home
  - “It’s nice to have your own things around you.”

Losses

- Curtailment of activities of daily living
  - “I can’t stand anybody eating…in front of me. It is a real problem.”
- Limiting bodily freedom
  - “All the wires get tangled when I’ve been in bathroom”
- Imposed routine
  - “They come too early in the afternoon”
- Impact on family caregivers
  - “I am physically falling to bits”

Discussion

- Patients and family caregivers recognised the treatment as a life line and were grateful for it.
- However, this benefit came with losses.
- Healthcare professionals need to be realistic about these and aware of family caregiver needs.
- Nevertheless, patients are prepared to suffer these losses in order to continue living.

Conclusion

- Data from the study will be useful in informing the decision making process of doctors and patients with ovarian cancer considering PN.

References


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