

ANXIETY LEVELS IN CANCER PATIENTS AND “LIFE SOUND” EXPERIENCE

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Aims and background: For the hospitalized cancer patient, time takes on a rhythm which is very different from the external reality. Based on the idea that time represents a fundamental dimension of human existence and is connected to future plans, time spent waiting and memories, we carried out this experience entitled “Life Sound” project. The objectives of the project were to experiment different and unusual ways of spending time in hospital in order to improve the quality of life of the hospitalized cancer patient, to help the patient adapt to the hospital environment, to encourage awareness of self and to give a different meaning to time spent in the hospital. In particular, we evaluated the reduction in the levels of anxiety, in psychological suffering and the improvement in communication.

Methods: We met with patients, family members, friends, volunteers and department personnel (doctors, psychologists, nurses) in a room in the Oncology and Hematology Department set aside specifically for recreation activities such as

Key words: anxiety levels, palliative care.

having a cup of tea while listening to music, talking, joking, listening to people’s memories and celebrating birthdays, anniversaries and other special days. The study, which involved 109 patients, was carried out through the use of the questionnaire STAI-Y distributed before and after the event.

Results: The results showed a statistically significant difference in anxiety levels 2 hrs before participation (mean = 38.33) and 2 hrs after participation (mean = 34.77) in the program. This variation was also assessed based on gender, age, cancer stage, time since diagnosis and performance status but did not result in any statistically significant difference.

Conclusions: The “Life Sound” project encourages the emergence of positive feelings, of a renewed willingness to invest in personal and caring relationships, which are connected to the patient’s ability to face this illness, and the opening of new channels of communication with family members and hospital staff.