

THE MEANING OF LIFE, DEPRESSION AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN HAEMODIALYSIS PATIENTS

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Introduction

Seeing a meaning in life is a key element, which renders coherence to the structure of an individual's life, and is an important factor in their quality of life (QoL) and well-being. Facing chronic kidney disease, haemodialysis (HD) patients are compelled to re-assess their priorities in life and to identify the things that provide meaning to their everyday lives, in order to maintain a good QoL and a positive state of mind.

Objectives

We sought to analyse the relations between the meaning in life, on one hand, and the profiles of the sources of meaning, depression, and QoL, on the other. We also aimed to determine the level of importance of the things of meaning among the HD patients.

Methods

We included HD patients ≥ 18 years-old from our centre, who agreed to participate and who were capable of understanding the questionnaires used in the study. Patients were asked to fill in four questionnaires: the Short Form (36) Health Survey (SF-36) to evaluate the QoL; the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) to determine the severity of depression; the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) to assess the presence of and search for meaning in life; and the Sources of Meaning Profile - Revised (SOMPR) to assess the sources of meaning. Statistical analysis of correlations was done using Pearson's correlation and One-Way ANOVA tests. A $p \leq 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

Results

A total of 70 patients were included (38.6% males; mean age 54.5 ± 11.7 years). Significant correlations between the variables studied are shown in Table I. Self-transcendence (5.80 ± 0.84) was the profile of the sources of meaning with the highest presence in patients' lives, followed by collectivism (5.32 ± 1.25), individualism (5.20 ± 1.21), and self-concern (4.61 ± 1.05). Depression had a significant effect on mental health ($p = 0.002$), but not on physical health ($p = 0.114$). Also, the One-Way ANOVA test results demonstrated no effect of depression over the meaning of life ($p = 0.105$). Meeting basic needs (6.27 ± 0.96), engaging in personal relationships with family and/or friends (6.27 ± 1.20), and the relationship with nature (6.20 ± 1.12) were the most important sources of meaning in patients' lives, whereas participation in hedonistic activities was in the last place (2.28 ± 1.76). There were no significant differences by gender in terms of meaning of life, profiles of the sources of meaning, depression and QoL.

Conclusion

This study showed that HD patients find the meaning of life in things that are part of the profile that transcend the self. The QoL and the mental health of HD patients are influenced by depression. These data support the need for practical implementation of intervention strategies to alleviate depression.

References

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Correlations	Physical health	Mental health	Quality of life	Collectivism	Individualism
Depression	r = -0.373 p = 0.001	r = -0.531 p < 0.001	r = -0.490 p < 0.001	r = -0.296 p = 0.013	r = -0.300 p = 0.012
Individualism	r = 0.337 p = 0.004		r = 0.302 p = 0.11		

Table I. Pearson correlation table

Sources of meaning		M	DS
1.	Meeting the daily basic needs.	6.27	0.96
2.	Engagement in personal relationships with family and / or friends.	6.27	1.20
3.	The relationship with nature.	6.20	1.12
4.	Offering help and support to the others.	6.17	1.07
5.	Ensuring financial security.	5.74	1.45
6.	Awareness of personal achievements.	5.72	1.39
7.	Promoting the human values and ideals.	5.44	1.56
8.	Promoting culture and tradition.	5.44	1.57
9.	Involvement in personal development.	5.42	1.62
10.	The interest in human rights.	5.38	1.58
11.	Ensuring the legacy for the next generation.	5.37	1.78
12.	Participation in recreational activities.	5.15	1.76
13.	The interest in social causes.	5.11	1.77
14.	Participation in religious activities.	4.95	1.86
15.	Participation in creative activities.	4.51	1.94
16.	Getting the material things in order to ensure a better life.	4.15	2.01
17.	Participation in hedonistic activities (bets, parties).	2.28	1.76

Table II. Hierarchy of the sources of meaning