

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted for the purposes of exploring the stress level and coping behaviors of the postmastectomy patients. A descriptive-correlational design was used to examine the stress responses, coping behaviors and their relationships with perceived family relationship and age. The study was conducted from the December 21st, 1995 to the February 17th, 1996 in Beijing and Tianjin, China. There were fifty-seven postmastectomy patients participated in this study. Instrument which was used for data collection was a questionnaire that composed of four parts: demographic data form, MSSSI, JCS and FRAQ. Conceptual framework was supported by the findings. Major findings are concluded in this chapter. The implications for nursing and recommendations for further studies are presented in this chapter.

Conclusion of findings

Based on the findings from the present study, the following conclusions are made.

1. Patients receiving mastectomy experienced mild level stress physically and moderate level of stress emotionally at the eight to eleven days post surgery.

Emotional responses to stress appeared more severe than the physical ones.

2. The coping behaviors of the postmastectomy patients in the present study group were fair. They used various types of coping strategies. The most favored coping styles were optimistic, confrontive and self-reliant coping styles.

3. The stress level of the postmastectomy patients was influenced by the coping style used. Using of optimistic coping style could decrease the stress level of the postmastectomy patients. Conversely, using of emotive coping style could increase the stress level of the postmastectomy patients.

4. Patients' perceived family relationship had effect on their stress level. The better the perceived family relationship, the lower the stress level of the postmastectomy patients.

5. Patients' perceived family relationship related with the coping style they used. Women using optimistic coping style had better perception of their family relationship. Conversely, women with negative perception toward their family relationship were more likely to use emotive coping style which was proved as a negative influencing factor on stress in the present study.

6. Age had no significant influence on stress level of the postmastectomy patients at eight to eleven days post surgery, but was related with the supportant coping style. Older people used less support from outside.

Implication of findings

Implications for nursing practice.

Although the results of this study can not be generalized to a larger population of postmastectomy patients in China, nurses in clinical practice may want to take some of the factors found to be important with this sample into consideration when working with other mastectomy patients.

The finding of the emotional vulnerability of the postmastectomy patients suggests that nurses should pay more attention to the psychological reactions which may induce severe stress. Emotional support should be provided.

The findings regarding the relationships between the stress, coping behaviors and perceived family relationship suggest that nurses should have holistic view in assessing patients' conditions and pay more attention to patients' perception and their resource which is available. For women do not have appreciate coping style or family relationship, the nurses can serve as a professional agent through whom some women's concerns can be expressed, such as helping those women and family identify and use alternative resources, providing

information and exchanging of ideas. In this way, nurses can empower women to choose known, effective strategies for coping with some demands and opt for more creative and personally meaningful strategies for coping.

Implications for nursing education.

This study may give an idea to the nursing educators to include more theories of stress and coping into nursing curricula, especially in the graduate level in China. This study may also suggest the instructors to use the research findings in their teaching to aware both the physical and psychological responses of the patients.

Implications for nursing research.

The present study provide a baseline data for further research in stress and coping behaviors of the postmastectomy patients. It may inspire other people to further explore other unknown and unmeasured factors that influence the stress and coping behaviors of the post mastectomy patients.

Recommendations

Several recommendations need to be considered for future studies.

1. Replication of the study is needed with a more representative, randomly selected sample of postmastectomy patients from various hospitals in China.

2. Longitudinal study is needed to further explore the stress level and coping behaviors in women with breast cancer throughout the course of illness and rehabilitation, to identify the most critical time period for those women that require nursing care.

3. Other factors influencing the stress and coping of postmastectomy patients need to be further explored.

4. Since the MSSSI is partially adapted from others work, the FRAQ is newly developed by the investigator of the study, and the JCS is translated from the English version, therefore, test, revision and improvement of the instruments are needed to further prove the validity and reliability in the application among Chinese population.