

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION & SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of health seeking behaviour of tobacco related cancer patients of Cachar district and to ensure that the data of the study can be firmly positioned within this context.

This study aims to address a gap in the research that surrounds the issue of cancer. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the perception of patients (both males and females) of cancer including perception of risk and the factors that affect these perceptions. There is a general lack of information in this area and this study helps to gain a greater understanding of both males and females about their level of knowledge and their perceptions regarding cancer and as such, lead to improvement in health promotion and education aimed at the target group.

The findings show that all of the respondents are suffering from the deadly disease and most of them are greatly influenced by traditional culture. It is found from the observation that the respondents tell that they usually come for treatment regularly but in reality it doesn't take place due to distance and financial problems as the treatment is too expensive. The

most important problem is that the respondents including serious cases have to wait for long time for treatment.

The above brief review of literature suggests that good amount of works has been done in the related field i.e. tobacco related cancer. Still questions regarding this are remained to be answered especially why Cachar District is prone to cancer? In this context, the present study attempts to fill the gap because the population of Cachar is suffering from cancer due to severe use of tobacco. The researcher has noticed that family members of the patients are always in emotional rollercoaster of trying to be supportive, but they don't have knowledge about services, transportation, and health care system which is another major structured barrier to the population of Cachar. Superstitions and blind beliefs are also the barriers for the population of Cachar which obstruct them to go to avail health services available in the community. Culture plays a significant role which influences people not to take proper decisions related to health and it changes the attitudes of the peoples. Sometimes, financial matters become barriers for their treatments and if the earning member becomes sick, the other members work full time to meet their day-to-day expenses and for the medication of patients. Socio-demographic factors significantly drive the health seeking behaviours among general population of this district. After

adjusting with all factors, the poor people are more likely to use public hospitals rather than a private hospital due to costs, dissatisfaction with the quality of care and distance or transportation difficulties become the major constraints to take health care facilities.

In this present study it is found that the cancer survivors have described their experiences related to the disease like affecting of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.

Research shows that due to this illness, sometimes physical appearance changes which results in depression.

Cancer means death and it is a stigma of the society. If it is detected earlier, anyone can get over it or it can be cured. Nothing is impossible now a days and cancer can't take life. Now-a-days, various types of treatments options are found and many of these options can result in remission, i.e. continuation of life. Cancer treatment can be found very effective and the possibility of complete recovery is there.

Oncology Social Workers must be there to offer emotional and practical support to the cancer patients and their families through counseling. Their work may help a patient to attain the best possible quality of life. Oncology Social workers can provide education and knowledge at individual as well as community level to promote changes in behaviour. The

social worker needs to do something extra on different dimension to bring effective changes in health indicators.

One of the key issues associated with cancer is the importance of early diagnosis. If cancer is detected early, the outcome can be significantly more positive, cancer treatment becomes very effective and the possibility of complete recovery is there.

Some other suggestions that must be followed in any cancer institute is the social worker must be present at the time of diagnosis of cancer. Additional support must be provided in case of consulting with doctors. Social workers must be involved in the entire process of treatment and the primary duty or job of social worker is to remain with the patients and their families throughout the hospital stay. (Bruce Lord and Rosalie Pockett, 1998).

During the research it is understood that continuing educational interventions should be started at the institutional level highlighting the importance of screening and prevention of cancer in women as well as in men. Nursing staff especially well aware of this disease can educate masses, increase the health seeking behaviour in both the sexes and thus the burden of cancer can be reduced. There is a need to undertake similar community based studies about awareness and education interventions. Non-

communicable diseases including cancer are emerging as important public health problems in India. The major risk factors for these diseases are tobacco, dietary habits, inadequate physical activities, alcohol consumption, and infections due to viruses. The greatest impact to reduce the burden of cancer comes from primary prevention. Extensive persuasive health education is needed to be directed to control/reduce the tobacco habit. Nutrition education, safe sexual practices, attention to personal and genital hygiene etc. need to be imported for increasing public awareness. Based on the situations of study area, these strategies must be used - (i) education of public, (ii) practice of tobacco control and (iii) advocacy for tobacco control. And if these strategies are implemented than it is possible to control or reduce the tobacco habits in the community/society.

Apart from the above suggestions some others can be taken into account. These are as follows:

1. Health education and tobacco cessation services should be targeted at this high risk population to prevent sufferings and deaths that could be caused due to tobacco.
2. Sustained anti-tobacco campaign will have an impact in the long run.

3. To prevent use of tobacco to the public in general and the school or college students in particular, should be made aware of the demerits or vulnerability of using tobacco.
4. Anti- tobacco educational programmes and messages with the help of media should reach to a large population.
5. An individual must keeps themselves busy with work, recreational activities, and physical exercise, which will not lead to tobacco abuse.
6. The cancer patients or even the person without this disease must follow a disciplined life style, i.e. not to smoke or drink, which can lead to cancer.
7. Peer-group support for people suffering from cancer are a common supportive care, it may be benefited for the people suffering from cancer by increasing well-being improving adjustment and coping, reducing distress and most importantly provide cancer patients with an empathic and accepting environment and to share experiences.
8. Another most simple but might be effective suggestion for any individual who is tobacco user is that not to carry lighter in his pocket to stop himself from smoking.
9. Social Worker must bridge the gap between patient and doctor and between patient and family members.

10. The students of social work background must organize health camps for which they can actually stay in the community for about a week or so and must build good rapport with the community people, become their friend, know their health problems, assess their socio-economic, cultural, educational status and provide services to the community people according to their need. In brief, health education should be promoted in the community level.
11. NRHM as the project is all about health and it should promote health education.
12. Public education is of paramount importance to have control over this disease.
13. Last but not the least the Government Plans and Programmes should be regularly and rigorously evaluated. And the strengths and weakness of all such programmes should be known to the high Government Officials.

Social Work Intervention

During this study, the researcher has experienced that the respondents are in need of social work intervention where social workers need to make aware about the cancer-related pain, identifies the barriers that undermine

effective pain relief concerns that need to be addressed to the respondents. Any patients who face any illness and hospitalization often have social or emotional problems. Social Work Interventions with cancer survivors may improve length of lifespan as it reduces an individual's stress or tension level and helps to provide a continuum of care.

The practice of casework is a humanistic attempt for helping people who have difficulty in coping with the problems of daily life. It is one of the direct methods of social work which uses the case-by-case approach for dealing with individuals or families as regards their problems of social functioning. Case work aims at individualized services in the field of social work in order to help the client to adjust with the environments (S. Rengasamy).

Social Case Work, a primary method of social work, is concerned with the adjustment and development of individual towards more satisfying human relations. Better family life, improved schools, better housing, more hospitals, and medical care facilities, protected economic conditions and better relations between religious groups help the individual in his adjustment and development. But his adjustment and development depend on the use of these resources by him. Sometimes due to certain factors, internal or external, he fails to avail existing facilities. In such situations,

social case worker helps him. Thus, social case work is one to one relationship, which works in helping the individual for his adjustment and development. Many wrong notions about things prevent people from handling difficult situations effectively. Many people have superstitious beliefs about diseases which prevent them from taking prompt medical treatment which can cure the disease. For example, if a man believes that his child's cancer or any other disease due to the possession of a devil, he is likely to try remedies which will worsen the condition. Sometimes it is ignorance of existing services and resources which delays action. Help is required to correct distorted perceptions and for obtaining essential information. Various types of illness make people helpless or irrational to face the difficulties. For instance, when in a family the father is ill, the mother will have to bear extra burden and face problems alone for which she may require outside help. The patient and his family need help to accept the illness of the former and to make realistic plans for the present and future days. (S. Rengasamy)

The social worker can help clients handle the challenges of a cancer diagnosis, including speaking, understanding treatment options, coping with feelings and reducing stress, as well as navigating family relationships and the workplace. They can connect patients with additional services, as well as

refer them to any other necessary health professionals, such as a nutritionist or a psychologist. Social work makes important contributions across the Cancer Control Continuum – from prevention, detection, and diagnosis to treatment and survivorship, assisting “the whole person in the context of the behavioural, social, and environmental factors that influence cancer” (NCI, 2002).

Social Workers can help the medical staff to appreciate the psychosocial needs of cancer patients.

1. At the time of Diagnosis: This is the period when the person becomes aware of a symptoms, where he/she will undergo several tests and while waiting for result they may suffer from extreme anxiety, and when they are confirmed about the disease they feel shocked, anger, frustration, fear, etc. The family members can be panic and forget the important role of listening to and supporting the sick member. At this stage social workers need to work closely with the medical professionals in helping the patient to build up trusting relationship with the concerned parties including family, the doctors, the nurse and the social worker can assist the patient and the family members to acquire knowledge about cancer and its treatments.

2. During treatment period: The complexity in cancer treatment may usually result in many side effects for which sometime patients rejects to take treatment and for which quality of life and social functioning decreases. Here, the social workers should make the doctors understand to understand the fear and discomforts of the patient which will make the patient feel much better.
3. During the post-treatment stage: This stage is called the stage of 'survivorship'. With the accumulation of successful treatments for cancer, more and more people are cured and become cancer survivors. In this stage, the cessation of treatment usually means a loss of intensive attention from the medical profession, social workers as well as from family members and friends. However, the impart of this disease and/or treatment on the patients energy, body image, daily activities and sexual activities may remain even when treatment comes to an end. Moreover, life style, family relationships, economic well-being, value out look on life, spiritual and existential concerns may also be altered. Uncertainty about recurrence is still a great emotional burden to the patients. Relatively minor aches and discomfort may cause him/her to think the cancer has returned. Concerns about health become paramount among cancer survivors.

Here the social worker plays vital role that how to help these people to relieve the burden of 'fear of recurrence' and to lead new lives which is very interesting. With appropriate intervention and support, people can make use of their cancer experiences as a stepping- stone for personal growth. They can channel their energy into more productive forms of helping other people with similar experiences.

4. During Terminal Stage: In this the stage the patients always remain anger which is the common reaction in cancer patients, because they think that they will die soon while other will remain healthy and alive. And they also think that they become burden of the family. Here, the social worker should help the patient to accept the reality, to complete the unfinished work or business and to teach others how to manage pain through relaxation and meditation. (Cecilia Lai-Wan Chan & Nancy Rhind, 1997).

The roles of medical social worker are very important in this large society. Professional Social workers are trained to recognize and assist with the psychosocial needs of cancer patients and their families. They have the knowledge and skills required to assist cancer patients and their families with emotional, practical, and administrative issues in various ways. They can facilitate individual and group counseling and ensure that clients are

referred to appropriate services (Cwikel & Behar, 1999). The family level knowledge and awareness always have both positive as well as negative influence on the cancer patient, because if family members have knowledge and awareness related to cancer, they can provide good care to the patient but if they lack of knowledge and awareness than it may affect adversely. The communication in any form is most important for making change in the society and it requires changing the content from entertainment to education for proper social developments. The quality of the content will have an impact of improving the quality of life. The Social Workers can go for community interventions that may reduce tobacco advertisement, promotion and commercial availability of tobacco products. Social Workers are to link client with the needful resources and the NGOs should come forward with health related projects especially about cancer. Medical social workers should be there to offer emotional and practical support to cancer patients as well as their family members through individual and family counseling and support.

Apart from the above Social Work Interventions, Social Workers can be follow others like providing support to the tobacco users to quit from tobacco taking, which is the primary care and make them aware about the bad affects of tobacco such as it reduces health, it creates problems in

food intake or food intake will be less and will create many other health related problems also. Due to this, an individual have to spend much of his/her income and for which family will face various problems. The most important intervention is behavioural interventions or behaviour modification programmes should be there to bring change in behaviour patterns by offering positive reinforcements for appropriate behaviours and negative consequences for inappropriate behaviours.

The Indian Constitution does not directly include the right to health as a fundamental rights but it ensures social and economic justice. Many articles are there which are directly or indirectly related to public health, for example article 39(e) related with workers to protect their health, article 42 makes provision to protect the health of infant and mother by maternity benefit and like these many other articles are there related to health of the whole population.

Future Studies

The findings lend support for further research into the area of tobacco related cancer. The most important thing is that till date social work profession are yet to being in the society. Future research can lead to identify more evidence based interventions for cancer patients. More researches are needed to further explore assumptions related to tobacco

related cancer. Additionally, studies could include a more diverse sample of cancer patients from different socio-economic backgrounds.

In conclusion, despite limitations, this study suggests that people would like to be educated about cancer and its treatment. Having this knowledge can empower people to consider their choices when making decisions related to their cancer treatment. The women specially, who have been diagnosed with breast cancer, need to be prepared both educationally and psychologically from initial stage of diagnosis to determine their treatment options and the social workers can help the patients. Literally, women need to stop depending on others without knowing the consequences of their choices and need to take active part in making decisions regarding their treatment.