

Special Article

Social Isolation and its Applicability to Persons with Sarcoidosis and Alpha-1 Antitrypsin Deficiency: A Dimensional Concept Analysis

Susan K. Flavin, MSN, RN, Doctoral Candidate

Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, USA

Correspondence: Susan K. Flavin, MSN, RN, 132 Barton Drive, Spring City, PA 19475, USA

Email: flavin@musc.edu

Abstract

Background: Social isolation is a phenomenon that is a major health problem among various individuals. The chronically ill and other marginalized populations suffering from the stigma of a health condition are especially vulnerable. No studies to date have examined this meaning of this concept in rare lung diseases, including sarcoidosis or alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency.

Aim: The aim of this paper is to gain further insight into the concept of social isolation and how it might apply to sarcoidosis and alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency. A dimensional analysis was undertaken to examine the various uses of the concept. Dimensional analysis is a method of concept analysis that is particularly useful in exploring a concept such as social isolation that may be somewhat ambiguous.

Methodology: The analysis includes 15 papers from 15 research studies from the disciplines of nursing, social sciences, psychology, palliative care and medicine. Caron and Bowers' dimensional analysis approach informed the analysis, and coding of the perspective, context, conditions, process, and consequences of social isolation was performed.

Results: The perception of having limited or low social networks is the central organizing standpoint of individuals experiencing perceived social isolation. Social isolation often occurs in adults as the result of a chronic illness. Individuals who exist in a stigmatized environment are at risk. Individuals at risk for social isolation may benefit from such interventions as peer counselling, support groups or internet-based support. Finally, clinicians should be cognizant of the deleterious effects of social isolation, including increased morbidity and mortality.

Conclusions: Social isolation remains an ambiguous concept which has garnered considerable attention within the last decade. The type of and magnitude of social isolation can be dependent upon the context, the condition, and the tools to facilitate management of the phenomenon. Specific to rare lung diseases, further research is warranted and timely.

Key Words: social isolation, sarcoidosis, Alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency, dimensional concept analysis