

Original Article

Spiritual Coping in People Living with Stroke

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Abstract

Background : The strength of spiritual beliefs considered can influences the ability to cope after a stroke event. However there is a paucity of literature and evidence with regard to spiritual coping in stroke patients.

Objective : This study aimed to explore lived experienced of spiritual coping in partisipants who were stroke.

Methods : This qualitative study in which data collected through in-depth interview. Interviews were audiotaped, transcribed verbatim and analyzed using the Collaizi's method.

Results : Four themes were identified : Feeling connected to God, trusting in God, seeking spiritual support, finding meaning and purpose.

Conclusion : Spiritual coping of stroke patients should be recognized, realized, and considered in nursing care. Further study is needed to explore how nurses provision of spiritual care in stroke patients.

Keywords : *Spiritual care , spiritual coping, stroke patients*

Introduction

Stroke leads to emosional problems, but little attention has been paid to solve. The emotional needs of stroke patients go unmet in many cases, two-thirds felt that their emotional needs were not looked (Stroke Association, 2013). The strength of spiritual beliefs considered can influences the ability to cope after a stroke event, which may protect individuals with stroke from experiencing emotional distress (Giaquinto, Sarno, & Army, 2010; Johnstones, Glass, & Oliver, 2007), spirituality seems to play an important role in coping.

Spiritual coping is a set of religious and spiritual rituals or practices based on relation with God, the transcendent, and other highest elements and is used by individuals to control and overcome

stressful, illness and suffering situations (Cabaco, Caldeira, Vieira, et al, 2017). The various awful stressors of illness may render the patient aware of they loss of power, consequently, the patients may go beyond their self to reach a higher power to gain control over their life process.

Spiritual coping in chronic illness may reduce the risk of permanent disability and help to combat symptom burden, which may enhance indenpendence. In stroke context, Strong spiritual connection could help with a person's acceptance of their new situation post-stroke , retaining hope, increasing motivation to work harder during rehabilitation, and encourage patients to fight through challenges post-stroke (Chow & Becker, 2010 ; Omu, Alobaidi, & Reeynolds, 2014 ; Lamb, Buchanan, Godfrey, et al, 2008).

Although a multiple studies have shown the attending spiritual needs of clients as a positive and effective for enhance health outcomes, but in the stroke context there is a paucity of literature and evidence with regard to lived experienced of spiritual coping . Therefore, it is relevant to conduct studies to deepen the analysis as to how people with stroke cope the problems. This study aimed to explore lived experienced of spiritual coping in partisipants who were stroke.

Methods

The study used descriptive phenomenology and involved unstructred interviews with 7 stroke patients from stroke centre in Makassar. The inclusion criteria were the medical diagnosis of participants was ischemic stroke, the onset of stroke for 1 month or longer, they would be able to provide detailed accounts of their lived experience of spiritual coping mechanisms.

The data were analyzed with Collaizi's method .This process was started by listening to the whole tape-recordings several times and transcribing them verbatim. The transcripts were read repeatedly to develop an understanding of the meaning. Afterwards, data were categorised and regrouped into broader categories out of which themes were formed. The themes were integrated into a description of participants' experience of spiritual coping mechanisms. Summaries of the main themes were fed back to participants at the end of the session in an attempt to validate understanding.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Research Ethics Commitee Faculty of Medicine, Hasanuddin University. All participants received through information regarding the study, their rights and privacy before signing the informed consent.

Results

Participants were 7 patients including 3 men and 4 women within the age range 34 -68 years and with of the ischemic stroke. The religious affiliation of clients consists of 5 Moslems and 2 Christians. Four themes were identified in this study, these are descibed below.

Feeling connected to God

All patients acknowledged that they felt connected to God through prayer. Prayer was used as a personal resource in communicating

with a supreme power due to cope the impact of disease and to gain support :

“ I always asked to God in my prayer after take a shalat, please help me to overcome this suffering, I say to Him, please give the grace and the endurance to past this situation ..I beleive that only God can help me to solve my problems “

Five participants stated that the relationship with God helped them to felt peace. One participant in this regard said :

“ I frequently remember God thru a zikir.., prayer and zikir calmed my soul..I felt that Allah was present with me”.

Two participants referred to use of religious song as a connectedness to God. The religious song, was a reminder always to admit and depend on God for support in suffering. A participant observed :

“In my loneliness, I always remember God by sing a spiritual songs...I know God listened to me, He's power will heal me “.

Trusting in God

Almost of participants stated that by surrendering to Allah they have been able to accept the reality of the sequele of stroke and cope with its complications. A patient shared her experience :

“ It was not easy for me.., I knew that long-term treatment was needed for my stroke, may be 1 year or more. But when I trusted in God and surrendered to His will, I could cope with the reality of my paralyzed”.

Some patients also reflected that surrendering to and trusting in God would decrease anxiety and find a feeling of comfort and peace. A patient disclosed :

“ Sometimes I worry about what might happen in the future and how to adapt to this situation, So I just surrender everything to my God, I believe that Allah knows what is the best for me. That's made me feel well and quiet”

Seeking spiritual support

All participants expressed a need to be connected with others who are seen as a sources of spiritual support for them : they family, friends, relatives, and professionals team in the hospital. A patient said :

“ My wife, my children, support me in every way.... They prayed intensely for my healing, they always here to help me in everything”.

Another participant shared experienced :

“My friend and my relatives came to visit and made me fun and laugh.., They rise me up, gave me energy to keep me going, that’s keep my spirit high”

The ability to maintain a psychological wellbeing supported by a health care team. A patient disclosed :

“Nurses and doctors visit, They gave me motivation to go through recovery phase with optimism.. . I really appreciate their care and support”

Finding meaning and purpose

The majority of participants said that positive attitudes as the meaning of my illness. One of them disclosed :

“When i was sick, I pray better, felt closer to God”

Another participant revealed :

“In this period, I spend the day to contemplate.. to be better in my life in future. God wants to test me, to see how thankful I am in every problems”.

Stroke appears to be a time of reflection, which may enable individuals to count one’s blessing in life. One participant in this regard said :

“ I have to say thanks to Allah that He gave me a chance to live.. this sickness is a blessing, it’s a way to be more grateful for His love and grace.., I believed that it’s a way to repent all my sins.”.

“I was lucky ..Lord gave me a stroke as a learning to be better, to be aware that healthy is so important in our life.., the best thing in this life is to be healthy”

Discussion

The findings of this research elucidated that a variety of spiritual coping mechanisms of patients with stroke is a main strategy to cope the sequelae of disease. Several study found that the connection with God that may give some hope, optimism, energy, security, and inner strength to solve the problems of patients (Rahnama, Khoshknab, Maddah, et al, 2012 ; Narayanasamy, 2002; Meisenhelder, D’ambra,

Jabaley, 2016; Baldachino, Torskenaes, Kalfoss, et al, 2013). Prayer is a way to communicate with Lord. When stroke patients felt hopeless due to their paralyzed, They are prayed thru shalat and zikr to acknowledged their needs. This finding was consistent with study of Rao, Sibbritt, Phillips, et al, (2015) who showed that prayer as the most highly approved way to adverse circumstances in life. The spiritual connection emerged to provide a sense of confidence about the future for stroke survivor (Lamb et al, 2008), it appears to be a significant coping resource post-stroke, alleviating the burden of sudden disability (Smith, 2002).

The stroke lessen physical energy and abilities to function normally (Chow & Becker, 2010), that’s a stressor for patients, so they need to use coping strategies. Trust in God and surrender to His will made the patients may accept their illness and try to adapt a new conditions. These patients better tolerated the paralyzed , whereby anxiety will be alleviated. These results were in line with the results of (Omu, Alobaidi, & Reeynolds, 2014) who said that trust in God help the sufferers to accept of their new situation post-stroke, it reinforced the hope needed for recovery. Belief in God, empowered patients to adapt the impact of the current stressors, so they be stronger than before (Hatamipour, Rassouli, Yagmaie, et al, 2015 ; Albaugh, 2003; Newman & Fawcett, 2010).

A further revealing aspect of this study is that some participants stated that when stroke was occurred, they felt closer to God and reflect on their condition while confessing their blessing in life, that is, finding meaning in their illness. This is consistent with research demonstrating the participants experience was more gratitude for blessings conferred by God and closer to God (Rahnama, Khoshknab, Maddah, et al, 2012 ; Mundle, 2015). Stroke gave a new perspective on patients life, where their life are meaningful. Living with the meaning and hope was a significant factor that contributed individual to adapt their illness, to reduce emotional distress and gain quality of life (Lin & Wu, 2003). The capacity to find spiritual meaning in illness influenced by personal faith, spiritual contentment and religious practice (Travelbee, 2007).

An important factor of the personal’s spirituality is the sense of relationship with others. In this study participants reflected that the spiritual

support was came from their family, friends, relatives, and professionals team. This finding consistent with evidence that the others who understand sufferers have a role in accomodating spiritual needs and supplied hope and peace (Magill, 2009). Family members have an important role to play in the reintegration of the patients into their activities and social life (Lutz, Young, Cotz, et al, 2011 ; Maeshima, 2013). Relationship is considered the social dimension of spiritual needs , which is expressed in the form of love, belonging and contact with others(Bussing & Koenig, 2010). The other study result acknowledged that long-term nurse–patient interactions have a positive effect on the spiritual dimension of patients (Rassouli et al, 2015).

Conclusion

Results of this qualitative study comprised four strategies in spiritual coping of stroke patients, included : Feeling connected to God, trusting in God, seeking spiritual support, finding meaning and purpose. Spiritual coping of stroke patients should be recognized, realized, and considered in nursing care. Further study is needed to explore how nurses provision of spiritual care in stroke patients.

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