

TESTING OF UNCERTAINTY IN ILLNESS THEORY TO PREDICT QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG THAIS WITH HEAD AND NECK CANCER

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Abstract: This cross-sectional descriptive study tested the Uncertainty in Illness Theory to determine factors influencing quality of life among Thais with head and neck cancer. The selected variables were symptom experience, Buddhist practices, uncertainty, depression, and QOL. A sample of 240 head and neck cancer patients was recruited from five hospitals in Bangkok. The instruments included a: Set Test; Demographic Questionnaire; Modified Symptom Experience Scale; Buddhist Practices Scale; Community version of Mishel's Uncertainty in Illness Scale; Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale; and, Version 4 of the Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy General Scale. The hypothesized model was tested using LISREL 8.52.

The model fit the empirical data and explained the majority of the variance in uncertainty, depression and quality of life among the subjects. Symptom experience had a positive impact directly on uncertainty and indirectly on depression and QOL, mediated through uncertainty. On the other hand, uncertainty had a negative impact on quality of life, but a positive impact on depression. Buddhist practices had a positive, although non-significant, impact on QOL, but did not have an indirect effect either on uncertainty through symptom experience or on depression and QOL through uncertainty. These findings may help in managing symptom experience and uncertainty, contribute to preventing and reducing depression, and enhance QOL in patients with head and neck cancer.