

SYMPTOM EXPERIENCE AND SELF-CARE AMONG THAI WOMEN WITH CERVICAL CANCER

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Abstract : The purposes of this study were to describe the: (a) occurrences, intensity and distress of Thai women's symptoms pre-treatment (T1), during-treatment (T2) and one month post-treatment (T3) for cervical cancer; (b) strategies and effectiveness of self-care behaviors used to relieve the five most frequent, severe and distressing reported symptoms during each period of treatment; and, (c) patterns of change in symptoms the women experienced and their self-care effectiveness from pre- to post-treatment (T1 – T3). One hundred and ninety subjects, recruited from four hospitals, completed three questionnaires, including the: Demographic, Disease and Treatment Questionnaire; Modified Memorial Symptom Assessment Scale; and, Modified Self-Care Diary.

Different symptoms and self-care behaviors occurred during each treatment period. During pre-treatment, vaginal discharge was the most common symptom, while difficulty swallowing was the most intense and distressful symptom. However, during both pre- and post-treatment, mood changes was the symptom that most often required self-care, while "tried to think that whatever will be, will be and do the best you can" and "relaxed by walking, watching TV or listening to music" were the most frequently selected forms of treatment, and "used Dhamma to calm down" was the most effective treatment. The most common self-care performed for vaginal discharge was "frequently cleaned the perineum." During treatment, fatigue was the most frequently occurring symptom, while diarrhea and rectal irritation were the most intense and distressful ones. "Took naps" was the most frequently used and effective strategy for relieving fatigue. After treatment, changes in the skin was the most common symptom, while a problem with sexual interest/activitv was the most intense svmtom and feeling nervousness was the most

fatigue was the most frequently occurring symptom, while diarrhea and rectal irritation were the most intense and distressful ones. "Took naps" was the most frequently used and effective strategy for relieving fatigue. After treatment, changes in the skin was the most common symptom, while a problem with sexual interest/activity was the most intense symptom and feeling nervousness was the most distressful symptom. Sleeping difficulty was found to be present during all three treatment periods; with "rested in bed" the most frequently used and "took sleeping pills" the most effective self-care strategies. Changes in symptom experience increased significantly during treatment and decreased during post-treatment, while self-care effectiveness decreased during treatment and increased during post-treatment. The findings suggest health care providers need to assist women in learning to utilize appropriate self-care strategies in accord with their symptom experiences.

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