

THESIS TITLE : THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF THE AGING PATIENTS  
WITH CANCER

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine types of the spiritual needs of aging patients with cancer at Srinagarind Hospital, the relations between aging patients and types of spiritual needs and the impact of illness on the patients' spiritual needs.

The sample group was composed of 75 cancer patients at stage 3 and 4, aged 60 years old and over. These patients were on radiation and/or chemotherapy during March to June 1993. All samples were interviewed by using the structured and in-depth interviewing methods developed by the investigator.

The results of this study showed that:-

1. The spiritual needs of the aging patients with cancer were:-

1.1 The types of the spiritual needs were:-

1.1.1 The spiritual needs which make life meaningful. The most common finding was religion (66.67%), followed by family (41.33%), and career (16.00%).

1.1.2 The spiritual needs related to the purpose or optimal goal of life. Most of the patients (56%) wanted to recover from illness and be healthy. Many patients wished to have an opportunity to practice their religious activities (37.33%). Others wanted to live longer and able to see their children's progress (36%). About fifteen percent (14.67%) wanted to continue their career and 2.67% wished they could die peacefully. A few (1.33%) still wanted to participate in community services while the remaining (1.33%) wished to see their son become a monk.

1.1.3 The sources of hope and strength. The most common was religion (85.33%), followed by career satisfaction (14.00%). The large number of the sample (98.67%) admitted that superstition was one factor behind their hope and strength.

1.1.4 Other types. Belief and values were the types of spiritual needs which bring happiness and the blessing of life to all respondents (100%).

1.2. The relations between aging patients and their spiritual needs were:-

1.2.1 Religion is a meaningful factor. It is the purpose, optimal goal of life, and a source of hope and strength. For all of the patients (100%), religion was the symbol of a supreme being that gave the patients strength for recovering from their illness ( $n = 74$ ). All of the patients (100%) wanted to practise normal religious activities as they used to do at home. They wanted to pay homage to God in order to lessen their anxiety and their suffering ( $n = 75$ ). The patients (100%) needed religion to calm themselves when they were dying ( $n = 75$ ).

1.2.2 Family. The patients (100%) needed love and care as well as helping hands in their daily activities from their families ( $n = 61$ ).

1.2.3 Career • satisfaction was the factor of strength which brought the feeling of pride. All of the patients (100%) were happy to recall success or to relate it to the others.

1.2.4 Superstition and supranatural beings were the factors behind hope and strength which all of the patients (100%) wanted to keep in their minds.

2. The impact of illness on spiritual needs. Most of the patients (76%) had an anxiety about the optimal goal of life. They worried about not having an opportunity to practise their religious activities as usual. About nineteen percent (18.67%) worried about having to change their life goal. A large number of the sample (81.97%) thought that hospitalization could obstruct normal relations with their families due to the limitation of visiting hours and economic problems which prevented the family to be at their bedside. A few in the sample (1.33%) said that certain hospital treatments were against their beliefs.