

A CROSS- CULTURAL COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DEMORALIZATION AND SUBJECTIVE INCOMPETENCE IN ITALY AND IN THE UNITED STATES.

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Background: Demoralization follows a shattering of an individual's assumptive world. The presentation of distress may vary widely from culture to culture and even within the same culture. Studies examining demoralization among cancer patients have been conducted in Italy, Germany, Australia, China, Taiwan, and the United States. Although demoralization has been studied in various countries, comparative studies of this construct across cultures have not been undertaken. Subjective incompetence has a role in converting what might have been a normal response to stress into an abnormal state requiring intervention, plays a major role in demoralization, and has not been examined cross culturally.

Aim: To examine cultural variation in demoralization and subjective incompetence among cancer patients in Italy and the United States.

Methods: Subjects with breast cancer were recruited from cancer outpatient centers in New Haven, CT and Bologna, Italy. Subjects near end of life needing hospice admission were excluded. Subjects were administered questionnaires that evaluated perceived stress, social support, resilience, quality of life, demoralization, subjective incompetence, and depression. Information on the type of cancer and cancer treatment was collected. The PERI-D and Kissane demoralization scales and a subjective incompetence scale were used. Bivariate and multivariate analyses were done.

Results: In the USA 151 patients were interviewed and in Italy, 142 patients. Preliminary data analysis found that demoralization was considerably higher in cancer patients in Italy (Kissane demoralization scale USA mean 17.7 ± 12.3 , Italy mean 28.1 ± 15.1 , $t = -6.30$, $df = 285$, $p < 0.001$). Subjective incompetence was higher among Italian cancer patients (USA mean 5.37 ± 4.22 ; Italy 9.02 ± 3.85 ; $t = -7.57$, $df = 278$, $p < 0.001$).

Discussion: The difference in cancer stress and its implications cross-culturally will be further explored and the role of psychotherapy in combating demoralization will be discussed.

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Learning Objectives:

1)At the conclusion of this presentation learners will be able to understand cultural variations that occur in demoralization.

2)At the conclusion of this presentation learners will be able to understand cultural variations that occur in subjective incompetence.

References:

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