

General comfort in caregivers of women with terminal cancer

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: To analyze the Portuguese version of the General Comfort Questionnaire (GCQ) as an instrument to assess the holistic comfort of Brazilian informal caregivers of terminally-ill breast cancer patients, treated in a School Hospital dedicated to women care (CAISM).

Subjects and Methods: For this cross-sectional study, 133 informal caregivers of terminally ill women (stage III or IV EGOG Performance Status, 62 with women with gynecological cancer and 71 with breast cancer) completed the GCQ between August 2002 and May 2004. Mean scores and standard deviations (SD) of each GCQ component were calculated. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to test for internal reliability. To address the effects exerted by the caregivers' characteristics on global GCQ scores, analysis of variance (ANOVA), followed by Tukey's Honest Statistical differences were implemented, and p values were determined for each studied characteristic. Stagewise multiple linear regression was used to determine possible correlations between caregivers' characteristics and general comfort.

Results: Anxiety and depression were strongly correlated with lower mean GCQ scores ($p < 0.001$ for both). Younger caregivers presented with lower GCQ scores ($p < 0.01$), compared to caregivers aged 56 years or more. Male caregivers had a significantly higher mean GCQ score than their female counterparts ($p = 0.01$). Patients' spouses were significantly more comfortable as compared to other caregivers ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusions: The results of this study reveal that GCQ is a very rich instrument to assess comfort and a good proxy for quality of life of terminally ill cancer patient caregivers. The instrument was easily understood by this group of caregivers and helped them to identify some of their important needs.
