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The Effect of Cancer Stigma on the Quality of Life in Hepatobiliary-Pancreatic Cancer Patients

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Introduction : Cancer stigma (CS), that is a self-inflicted hopeless feeling, has been regarded as a important factor affecting outcomes in patients with several cancers. However, there are few studies about CS- related outcomes in HBP cancer. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of CS on the QoL, function, and symptoms of HBP cancer patients.

Methods : From 2017 to 2018, 75 patients who underwent curative surgery with HBP cancers were enrolled prospectively at Samsung Medical Center. The QoL was measured using the EORTC QoL score, and CS was evaluated in three categories, such as, 'Impossibility of recovery', 'cancer stereotypes', and 'social discrimination'. Negative stigma defined as patients with higher score than median value of participants distribution of cancer attitude.

Results : Negative CS group had a lower QoL difference (-17.34, 95% CI -26.38– -8.30, $p < 0.001$) than positive CS group. Similarly, most of functional scale and symptoms of negative CS group showed poor results compared to positive CS group. Among them, the cognitive function score difference (-21.43, 95% CI -30.50– -12.36, $p < 0.001$) was the highest parameter and fatigue was the most severe symptom with a difference of 22.36 (95% CI 12.87- 31.85, $p < 0.001$). There is no difference in terms of postoperative complication rate, and survival rate in both groups.

Conclusions : Even not affecting on cancer survival, negative stigma against cancer is an important, negatively affecting factor on the QoL in HBP cancer patients. Proper selection and management of these patients could be important to improve QoL after surgery.

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