

Health-Related Quality of Life in Mothers with Children With Cancer: A Systematic Review

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Background: Studies among parents of children with cancer have focused on anxiety, depression, or post-traumatic stress, and less so on overall measures, such as Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQoL).

Methods: Literature review in Scopus and Cinahl with terms: mothers OR carer setc AND child* OR adolesc* etc AND cancer or oncolog* etc AND quality of life OR HRQoL etc, in 65 combinations. Selection criteria: mothers (or predominately in mixed samples), children aged <18 in active treatment (no palliative), quantitative, some measure of quality of life, comparative (e.g. population norms, or control group) or correlational, or baseline in interventions, English language, prior 2015.

Results: Of 237 studies reviewed in full-text among 2184, 10 fulfilled all criteria: 6 mothers only, 4 mixed with separate results for mothers, and additional 10 with sample of predominately mothers. With the exception of a series of studies from Canada (N>400), most studies had small sample sizes (N<150). European studies originated from limited number of settings. There were single-sample correlational studies (e.g. coping, anxiety, depression, sleep quality), internal comparisons (e.g. single- vs two-parent families, time since diagnosis, or same group longitudinal, etc) or external (i.e. mothers of healthy children, or other diagnosis, or population norms). SF-36 was commonly used. In studies with external comparison, quality of life was significantly reduced amongst mothers (or parents) of children with cancer. Despite cross-national heterogeneity, in studies that the SF-36 commonly effect sizes were in the range of 0.5-1 SD for mental health and ~0.5 SD for physical health dimension.

Conclusions: Physical health as well as mental health aspects of the quality of life appear affected in this vulnerable group, highlighting the need to monitor and incorporate QoL as an outcome measure in assessing the effectiveness of psychosocial intervention programs.

Main messages: Quality of life is compromised in mothers of children with cancer.

Expressing QoL in comparative terms is important in highlighting the needs and assessing the effectiveness of intervention measures.

Biography:

Christiana Nicolaou is a lecturer in the department of nursing in the school of health sciences at Cyprus University of Technology. She completed her PhD in the Middlesex University. Her research interest is Health promotion/education, Community care/nursing