TESTING THE DEVELOPMENTAL CONTEXTUAL MODEL IN COUPLES LIVING WITH CANCER PAIN ACROSS THE ADULT LIFESPAN

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INTRODUCTION / AIM

Although age-related patterns in the relational impact of cancer pain have been described qualitatively, quantitative studies including spouse caregivers (SC) are unavailable. Using a developmental contextual framework, we investigated correlates of marital satisfaction (MS) and caregiving strain (CS) among patients with cancer pain and their SCs across the adult lifespan.

METHODS

53 patients with advanced cancer and pain completed measures of pain, physical and psychosocial wellbeing. SCs completed measures of their own pain and wellbeing, caregiving, and perceptions of their partner’s pain. Backward multivariate linear regression identified correlates (p≤.05) of MS and CS in patients and SCs.

RESULTS

Patients and SCs were 58.9±10.3 (range: 31-85) and 57.8±9.9 (range: 32-78) years old. 52.8% of patients and 45.3% of SCs were women. Interactions between age and patient and SC factors were non-significant. In patients, greater MS was associated with greater pain-related stoicism, symptom severity, and more frequently perceived SC distracting responses. Age was not retained. In SCs, greater MS was associated with more frequent solicitous responses, and lower attachment avoidance and depression. There was a trend for a relationship with older SC age (p=.09). Lower CS was associated with greater SC perceived patient pain intensity but lower interference, lower SC depression and greater caregiving mastery. There was a trend for a relationship with older SC age (p=.09).

DISCUSSION / CONCLUSIONS

Although age-related trends were found, other intra- and interpersonal factors played stronger roles in couples’ MS and CS. These factors may be targets for interventions to improve dyadic coping with cancer pain.

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