The attitude toward truth telling of cancer in Taiwan

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摘要
Abstract

Objective

This study examined a group of Taiwanese subjects at a medical university hospital regarding their attitudes toward truth telling of cancer.

Method

Self-report survey with convenience sampling of 195 participants admitted for a 3-day comprehensive health examination in a medical university hospital in Taiwan. Three instruments used to collect the data included the Brief Psychiatric Symptom Rating Scale (BPSRS), Chinese Health Questionnaire (CHQ), and the Attitude Toward Truth Telling of Cancer List.

Results

Once diagnosed with cancer, 92.3% of the participants preferred being told the truth about their diagnosis and 7.7% did not. Age, education, and employment were found to differ between disclosure and nondisclosure groups. The latter group also tended to have higher depression and hostility scores on the BPSRS and higher minor psychiatric morbidity scores. A total of 62.6% of the participants preferred that doctors tell a relative the truth about their cancer diagnosis, while 37.4% preferred that doctors not tell a relative the truth. The distributions of demographic data and mental status did not significantly differ between disclosure and nondisclosure groups if a relative was to be the cancer victim.

Conclusions

A majority of subjects in Taiwan would prefer to know the truth if victimized by a cancer disease, despite the supposed influence of Chinese culture. Furthermore, attitudes toward truth telling of cancer differed between relatives of patients and the patients themselves. Relatives of cancer patients were more likely to follow to the principle of beneficence, whereas the patients themselves were more likely to follow to the principle of autonomy.