

Buddhist Counseling for Cancer Patients to Meet their Psychological Needs

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Cancer is a serious health problem which is quite common presently. According to the WHO report, cancers figure among the leading causes of morbidity and mortality worldwide, with approximately 14 million new cases and 8.2 million cancer related deaths in 2012. The number of new cases is expected to rise by about 70% over the next 2 decades (World Cancer Report 2014). Cancer makes a person ill, physically as well as mentally and it is considered a terminal illness.

Cancer patients show various psychological problems than physical. For example, adjustment problems, stress related problems, organic symptoms, shock and numbness, denial, anger, bargaining and depression, fear of death, disappointment, communication problems and social problems with family and relatives etc. are commonly seen and sometimes, suicidal ideas as well. Therefore, counselling intervention is significant for them to adjust the situation.

Cancer patients require mainly emotional needs, spiritual needs, and social needs for their psychological well-being. Also, they need a better understanding of the reality of illness and life. The main goal of counselling is to help them to meet their psychological needs and to empower them. Buddhist counselling and its techniques which is based on Buddhist philosophy is able effectively to help them.

In the Buddhist counselling approach for cancer patients, doctrines such as the three inherent qualities of life (*tri-lakkhana*); impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and absence of a soul or self (*anatta*), four noble truths (*Cattāri Ariyasaccāni*), the concept of deeds and its consequence (*Kamma*), the eight unshakeable conditions (*putthassa lokadhammehi cittan yassa na kampati*), the theory of five cosmic laws (*pañca niyāma dhamma*) etc. are effectively used. In addition, the patients can be trained to practice a simple meditation (*Bhāvanā*), as it is stated that the meditation is the greatest mental exercise for all uncomfortable mental experience such as distresses, sadness, grievances, and disappointments. Further, patients can be educated to practice good deeds, charity and other religious activities.

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