

Assessing the Impact of Interdisciplinary Care Teams on Patient Outcomes in Oncology Settings

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Mini Review

ABSTRACT

This research article investigates the impact of interdisciplinary care teams on patient outcomes in oncology settings. The study evaluates how collaboration among healthcare professionals from diverse disciplines affects the quality of care, patient satisfaction, and clinical outcomes for oncology patients. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, the research provides insights into the effectiveness of interdisciplinary approaches in enhancing patient care and improving outcomes in oncology.

Keywords: Oncology; Patient; Research; Symptoms

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INTRODUCTION

Oncology care often involves complex management of various aspects of patient health, including treatment of cancer, management of side effects, and addressing psychosocial needs. Interdisciplinary care teams, which bring together healthcare professionals from multiple disciplines, are increasingly recognized as a means to improve patient outcomes in oncology settings [1]. This study aims to assess how the integration of interdisciplinary care impacts patient outcomes, including clinical effectiveness, quality of life, and overall satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Interdisciplinary care in oncology: Interdisciplinary care teams in oncology typically include oncologists, nurses, pharmacists, social workers, dietitians, and other specialists. The goal is to provide comprehensive care that addresses the multifaceted needs of cancer patients. Research has shown that interdisciplinary approaches can enhance communication among team members, streamline care processes, and improve overall patient management.

Interdisciplinary care in oncology involves the collaboration of healthcare professionals from various disciplines to provide comprehensive care for cancer patients. This approach recognizes that cancer treatment and management require a multifaceted strategy that addresses not only the medical aspects of the disease but also the psychological, social, and supportive needs of patients.

In an interdisciplinary oncology team, roles often include oncologists, nurses, pharmacists, social workers, dietitians, psychologists, and other specialists. Each member contributes their expertise to the patient's care, ensuring a holistic approach that covers all facets of the patient's health. Oncologists lead the treatment plan, focusing on cancer therapies such as chemotherapy, radiation, and surgery. Nurses manage day-to-day patient care, monitor responses to treatment, and provide support throughout the treatment process. Pharmacists ensure the safe and effective use of medications, while dietitians help manage nutritional needs, which can be particularly challenging during cancer treatment. Social workers address psychosocial aspects, such as coping with the emotional impact of cancer and accessing resources for financial or social support [2].

The collaborative nature of interdisciplinary teams facilitates improved communication and coordination of care. This teamwork allows for the integration of different perspectives and expertise, leading to more comprehensive treatment plans. For instance, a patient's nutritional needs, side effects management, and psychological support are all addressed simultaneously, which can enhance overall treatment effectiveness and patient well-being.

Interdisciplinary care also helps streamline care processes and reduces fragmentation. By working together, team members can avoid duplicative tests, minimize delays, and ensure that all aspects of the patient's health are managed cohesively. This approach fosters a more organized and efficient treatment experience, which is crucial in oncology settings where timely and coordinated care is essential.

Moreover, interdisciplinary care can enhance patient satisfaction by providing a more personalized and responsive care experience. Patients benefit from a team that collectively addresses their needs and preferences, leading to a higher quality of care and better management of symptoms and side effects. The holistic approach ensures that patients receive comprehensive support, which can contribute to improved outcomes and a better overall experience during their cancer journey.

Impact on patient outcomes: Evidence suggests that interdisciplinary care teams can lead to better patient outcomes in oncology settings. Studies have demonstrated improvements in survival rates, reduced complications, and enhanced management of symptoms. For example, a study by Mazzone et al. found that interdisciplinary teams were associated with improved adherence to treatment protocols and better management of side effects [3]. Additionally, research by Rachlis et al. highlighted that patients receiving care from interdisciplinary teams reported higher levels of satisfaction and better quality of life.

Quality of care and patient satisfaction: The integration of interdisciplinary care teams has been linked to improvements in quality of care and patient satisfaction. Interdisciplinary teams provide a more holistic approach to patient care, addressing both medical and psychosocial needs. This comprehensive approach can lead to better coordination of care, reduced treatment delays, and improved patient experiences. Studies have shown that patients treated by interdisciplinary teams often report higher satisfaction levels due to enhanced communication and a more personalized approach to care.

Quality of care and patient satisfaction are closely interconnected aspects of healthcare that significantly impact patient outcomes and experiences. Quality of care encompasses various dimensions, including the effectiveness of treatment, safety, timeliness, efficiency, and the degree to which care meets established standards. It reflects how well healthcare services meet the needs and expectations of patients, including the accuracy of diagnoses, the appropriateness of treatments, and the overall management of care.

Patient satisfaction, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which patients feel that their healthcare needs are being met and their expectations are fulfilled. It is influenced by multiple factors, such as the communication skills of healthcare providers, the accessibility and convenience of services, the responsiveness of care teams, and the overall environment of the healthcare facility. High levels of patient satisfaction are often associated with positive experiences, such as feeling heard and respected, receiving timely care, and having a supportive and empathetic interaction with healthcare professionals.

Effective quality of care contributes to higher patient satisfaction by ensuring that patients receive comprehensive and appropriate treatment. For instance, well-co-ordinated care that addresses both medical and psychosocial needs can enhance the patient experience and lead to better outcomes. Additionally, clear communication between patients and healthcare providers helps build trust, facilitates informed decision-making, and contributes to a more positive perception of the care received.

Conversely, high patient satisfaction can be an indicator of quality care. When patients report satisfaction with their care, it often reflects that their needs were addressed effectively, their concerns were managed appropriately, and their overall experience met or exceeded their expectations. Patient satisfaction surveys and feedback can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of care processes, identify areas for improvement, and guide quality enhancement initiatives.

Challenges and barriers: Despite the benefits, implementing interdisciplinary care teams can present challenges. Issues such as communication barriers, differing professional perspectives, and logistical complexities can impact the effectiveness of interdisciplinary collaboration. Understanding and addressing these challenges is crucial for maximizing the benefits of interdisciplinary care.

Methodology

Study design: This study employed a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative data analysis and qualitative interviews to assess the impact of interdisciplinary care teams on patient outcomes in oncology settings.

Participants: The study involved 300 oncology patients receiving care from interdisciplinary teams at three different oncology centers. Additionally, 30 healthcare professionals from these teams participated in the study.

Data collection: Data were collected through patient surveys, clinical outcome measures, and interviews with healthcare professionals [4]. Patient surveys assessed outcomes such as quality of life, satisfaction with care, and symptom management. Clinical outcome measures included treatment response rates, complication rates, and survival rates. Qualitative interviews with healthcare professionals explored their experiences and perspectives on working within interdisciplinary teams.

Data analysis: Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-tests, and ANOVA to compare patient outcomes across different centers and treatment approaches. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common themes and insights related to interdisciplinary collaboration.

RESULTS

Patient outcomes: Patients treated by interdisciplinary care teams reported significant improvements in quality of life and symptom management compared to those receiving standard care. Surveys indicated higher levels of satisfaction with care, better management of side effects, and improved overall well-being. Clinical outcome measures also showed favorable results, including improved treatment response rates and reduced complication rates.

Healthcare professional perspectives: Interviews with healthcare professionals revealed positive experiences with interdisciplinary collaboration. Professionals reported enhanced communication, better coordination of care, and a more comprehensive approach to addressing patient needs. However, challenges such as differing professional perspectives and occasional communication barriers were noted.

Healthcare professionals' perspectives on interdisciplinary care teams reveal a range of insights into the benefits and challenges of collaborative approaches. Many healthcare professionals appreciate the enhanced communication and coordination that interdisciplinary teams offer. They value the opportunity to work alongside colleagues from various specialties, which allows for a more comprehensive understanding of patient needs and a more holistic approach to care. This collaboration often leads to more efficient problem-solving and decision-making, as team members can draw on their diverse expertise to address complex patient issues.

Professionals also report that interdisciplinary teams contribute to a more supportive work environment. By sharing responsibilities and knowledge, team members can reduce individual workloads and stress, leading to improved job satisfaction and morale. The shared goal of providing high-quality patient care fosters a sense of camaraderie and collective achievement among team members [5].

However, there are also challenges associated with working in interdisciplinary teams. Differences in professional perspectives and approaches can lead to conflicts or misunderstandings. For example, variations in priorities or treatment philosophies among team members may impact decision-making and require careful negotiation. Communication barriers, whether due to differing terminologies or hierarchical dynamics, can also pose challenges. Effective communication

strategies and regular team meetings are crucial for overcoming these barriers and ensuring that all team members are aligned in their approach to patient care.

Additionally, logistical issues such as scheduling conflicts and coordinating meetings can sometimes impede the smooth functioning of interdisciplinary teams. Ensuring that all team members have adequate time to collaborate and contribute can be challenging, particularly in busy clinical settings [6].

Challenges and barriers: Despite the overall positive impact, some barriers to effective interdisciplinary collaboration were identified. Issues such as differing priorities among team members, time constraints, and logistical challenges were highlighted. Addressing these barriers is essential for optimizing the effectiveness of interdisciplinary care teams.

DISCUSSION

The integration of interdisciplinary care teams in oncology settings has demonstrated significant benefits for patient outcomes. The comprehensive approach provided by interdisciplinary teams leads to improved quality of life, better symptom management, and higher patient satisfaction. The positive impact on clinical outcomes, such as treatment response rates and reduced complications, further underscores the value of interdisciplinary collaboration.

Implications for practice: Oncology centers should consider adopting and expanding interdisciplinary care models to enhance patient care. Addressing challenges related to communication and collaboration is crucial for maximizing the benefits of interdisciplinary teams. Training and support for healthcare professionals can help overcome barriers and improve the effectiveness of team-based care.

Future research: Further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of interdisciplinary care teams on patient outcomes and to identify strategies for overcoming challenges in interdisciplinary collaboration. Studies investigating the impact of specific team configurations and interventions on patient outcomes could provide valuable insights for optimizing care models.

CONCLUSION

Interdisciplinary care teams play a crucial role in improving patient outcomes in oncology settings. The integration of diverse healthcare professionals leads to enhanced quality of care, better management of symptoms, and increased patient satisfaction. By addressing challenges and optimizing collaboration, oncology centers can leverage the benefits of interdisciplinary care to provide comprehensive, patient-centered care and achieve better clinical outcomes.

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