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REVIEWER'S REPORT

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Title: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY TO ASSESS THE MYTH, MISCONCEPTION AND STIGMA OF CANCER AMONG CANCER PATIENTS ATTENDING OPD OF A SELECTED ONCOLOGY HOSPITAL, KOLKATA

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓,		
Techn. Quality		✓,		
Clarity	✓,			
Significance	✓,			

Reviewer Name: Dr. Bilqees Hamza

Detailed Reviewer's Report

The research article titled "A Descriptive Study to Assess the Myth, Misconception and Stigma of Cancer Among Cancer Patients Attending OPD of a Selected Oncology Hospital, Kolkata" offers a poignant and necessary inquiry into the psychological and sociological barriers that complicate cancer care in India. The author establishes that despite medical advancements, cancer remains shrouded in fear, with societal perceptions often trailing behind clinical reality. By evaluating a sample of 100 patients at a specialized oncology center, the study investigates the prevalence of deeply ingrained myths and the "social death" often associated with a cancer diagnosis. The narrative successfully argues that the burden of cancer is not merely physiological but is heavily mediated by cultural stigmas that can lead to delayed treatment-seeking and profound emotional isolation.

The narrative begins by framing the escalating burden of cancer in West Bengal, with projections indicating a significant rise in cases by 2025. The author expertly evaluates the sociodemographic profile of the participants, noting that the majority belong to lower-middle-class backgrounds with limited formal education. A significant strength of this analysis is the use of structured Likert scales to quantify abstract concepts like "stigma" and "misconception." The study findings reveal that a staggering 87% of patients harbor moderate levels of misconception regarding the disease, while 83% experience moderate social stigma. The author handles these findings with sensitivity, suggesting that for many, the diagnosis triggers a "crisis of identity" fueled by the mistaken belief that cancer is a "divine punishment" or a contagious ailment.

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A primary focus of the research involves the evaluation of specific myths that persist among the patient population. The author explores common fallacies, such as the belief that biopsies cause cancer to spread or that sugar consumption directly feeds tumor growth. The study highlights that these misconceptions are not harmless; they often lead to "therapeutic wandering," where patients seek unproven alternative remedies before returning to conventional care in advanced stages. The author's evaluation of "Social Stigma" is particularly enlightening, revealing that many patients feel a sense of shame or a desire to hide their diagnosis from their community to avoid being ostracized. This "concealment behavior" is analyzed as a major barrier to the social support systems that are vital for recovery.

The discussion then moves to the correlation between demographic variables and the levels of stigma experienced. The author evaluates the finding that there is no statistically significant association between age or gender and the level of myth or stigma, suggesting that these cultural constructs are pervasive across the entire social spectrum. However, the study highlights that education remains a critical lever; those with higher literacy levels tended to have slightly fewer misconceptions. The author explores the psychological toll of these beliefs, noting that patients often internalize societal stigma, leading to depression and a diminished quality of life. The narrative effectively argues that "oncological literacy" must be integrated into the clinical workflow to empower patients against the "infodemic" of misinformation that surrounds them.

Furthermore, the paper addresses the role of healthcare providers in dismantling these barriers. The author explores the necessity of "empathetic communication" in the OPD setting, where the first encounter often sets the tone for the patient's entire treatment journey. The evaluation suggests that oncology hospitals should not only be centers for chemotherapy and surgery but also hubs for "psychosocial rehabilitation." The author proposes the implementation of structured counseling sessions and public awareness campaigns that use "cancer survivors" as ambassadors to humanize the disease and debunk common myths. The narrative concludes that the fight against cancer must be fought on two fronts: the biological battle within the body and the sociological battle within the community.

In summary, this article offers a robust and well-documented inquiry into the "hidden morbidity" of cancer. It successfully bridges the gap between clinical oncology and social psychology. The author's ability to link abstract cultural myths with concrete patient outcomes makes this a significant contribution to the field of nursing and oncology research in India. It is an essential read for oncologists, nursing professionals, and public health advocates, providing a clear evidence base for the necessity of holistic care models that treat the patient's mind and social standing as rigorously as their physical symptoms.

Recommendations

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- The author should consider incorporating a section on "Source of Information," specifically evaluating whether patients receive their misconceptions from family members, traditional healers, or unverified digital content (e.g., social media).
- To enhance the academic depth of the study, it is recommended that the author perform a "Qualitative Sub-study," including direct quotes from patients to provide a more nuanced understanding of the lived experience of "cancer stigma" in the Kolkata context.
- The paper would benefit from a dedicated discussion on the "Gendered Dimensions of Stigma," exploring whether female patients face unique challenges, such as abandonment or concerns regarding marital prospects, compared to their male counterparts.
- It is suggested that the author include a summary table or "Myth-Fact Sheet" based on the most common misconceptions identified in the study, which could serve as a practical tool for OPD counselors.
- Future research should explore the "Impact of Support Groups," investigating whether regular interaction with other cancer patients significantly reduces internalized stigma and improves adherence to the therapeutic regimen.

Recommendation: Recommend for publication with minor revision.