ISSN(O): 2320-5407 | ISSN(P): 3107-4928

International Journal of Advanced Research

Publisher's Name: Jana Publication and Research LLP

www.journalijar.com

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR- 57353

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	✔,			

Reviewers ID.: JPR- 223

Detailed Reviewer's Report

The manuscript entitled *"A Descriptive Study to Assess the Myth, Misconception and Stigma of Cancer Among Cancer Patients Attending OPD of a Selected Oncology Hospital, Kolkata"* presents a thoughtful and significant exploration of the psychological and social challenges that hinder effective cancer care in India. The study highlights that, despite considerable progress in medical science, cancer continues to be surrounded by fear and misunderstanding, with public perceptions lagging behind clinical advancements. Drawing on data collected from 100 patients at a specialized oncology facility, the research examines the persistence of entrenched myths and the phenomenon often described as "social death" following a cancer diagnosis. It convincingly demonstrates that the impact of cancer extends beyond physical illness, being deeply influenced by cultural stigma, which may result in delays in seeking treatment and increased emotional distress.

The paper opens by situating the issue within the rising cancer burden in West Bengal, projecting a notable increase in cases by 2025. The author provides a detailed assessment of the participants' sociodemographic characteristics, observing that most belong to lower-middle-income groups with limited educational attainment. A key strength of the study lies in the application of structured Likert scales to measure intangible constructs such as stigma and misconceptions. The findings indicate that 87% of respondents exhibit moderate misconceptions about cancer, while 83% report experiencing moderate levels of social stigma. These results are interpreted with care, suggesting that a cancer diagnosis often precipitates an identity crisis, reinforced by beliefs that the disease is either a form of divine retribution or a contagious condition.

A central component of the research is the examination of specific myths prevalent among patients. The author discusses widely held misconceptions, including the belief that biopsies can spread cancer or that sugar consumption directly accelerates tumor growth. The study underscores the harmful consequences of such beliefs, noting that they frequently lead patients toward "therapeutic wandering," where they pursue alternative, unverified treatments before eventually seeking conventional medical care at more advanced stages. The analysis of social stigma is particularly insightful, revealing that many patients experience shame and prefer to conceal their diagnosis to avoid social exclusion. This tendency toward secrecy is identified as a major obstacle to accessing essential social support systems.

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The discussion further explores the relationship between demographic factors and levels of stigma. The findings suggest no significant statistical association between age or gender and the prevalence of myths or stigma, indicating that these beliefs are widely distributed across different social groups. However, education emerges as an important factor, with higher literacy levels correlating with fewer misconceptions. The author also addresses the psychological consequences of stigma, highlighting how patients often internalize negative societal attitudes, leading to depression and reduced quality of life. The study effectively emphasizes the importance of integrating "oncological literacy" into clinical practice to counter widespread misinformation.

Additionally, the paper considers the role of healthcare professionals in addressing these challenges. It stresses the importance of empathetic communication during outpatient interactions, as initial encounters can strongly influence patients' treatment experiences. The author argues that oncology centers should extend their role beyond medical treatment to include psychosocial support services. Recommendations include structured counseling programs and awareness initiatives that involve cancer survivors as advocates to challenge myths and reduce stigma. The study concludes by asserting that combating cancer requires addressing both its biological aspects and the societal perceptions surrounding it.

In conclusion, the article provides a comprehensive and well-substantiated examination of the often-overlooked social dimensions of cancer. It successfully integrates perspectives from clinical oncology and social psychology, offering valuable insights for healthcare practitioners and policymakers. By linking cultural beliefs to patient outcomes, the study makes a meaningful contribution to nursing and oncology research in India. It serves as an important resource for oncologists, nurses, and public health professionals, emphasizing the need for holistic care approaches that address both physical and psychosocial aspects of the disease.

Recommendations

- The author may include a section addressing the "Source of Information," examining whether misconceptions arise from family influence, traditional practices, or unverified digital platforms such as social media.
- To strengthen the study, a qualitative component incorporating patient narratives or direct quotations could provide deeper insight into lived experiences of stigma.
- A focused discussion on gender-related aspects of stigma would enhance the analysis, particularly regarding challenges uniquely faced by female patients.
- The inclusion of a "Myth vs Fact" summary table based on the study findings would serve as a practical resource for outpatient counseling.
- Future studies could investigate the role of support groups in reducing stigma and improving treatment adherence among cancer patients.

Recommendation: Accept with minor revisions.