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PSYCHO-EMOTIONAL STATES OF WOMEN WITH ONCOLOGICAL DISEASES

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Abstract: This article reveals the information is provided about oncological diseases and the psychological factors that cause their development. As well as their prevalence in women and the impact of the disease on the female psyche.

Key words: cancer, tumor, depression, psychology, anxiety, cognitive distortions.

Nowadays, the number of patients suffering from cancer is increasing day by day. In order to study cancer from all sides, we must first know what it is. Tumors are a group of genetic diseases characterized by uncontrolled cell growth. According to the method of spread in the body, they are divided into 2 groups: benign and malignant. More than 100 different types of cancer are known.

Another type of cancer is leukemia. Cancers that begin in the blood-forming tissue of the bone marrow are called leukemias. These cancers do not form solid tumors. Instead, large numbers of abnormal white blood cells (leukemia cells and leukemic blast cells) build up in the blood and bone marrow, crowding out normal blood cells. The low level of normal blood cells can make it harder for the body to get oxygen to its tissues, control bleeding, or fight infections. Lymphoma is cancer that begins in lymphocytes (T cells or B cells). These are disease-fighting white blood cells that are part of the immune system. In lymphoma, abnormal lymphocytes build up in lymph nodes and lymph vessels, as well as in other organs of the body. Melanoma is cancer that begins in cells that become melanocytes, which are specialized cells that make melanin (the pigment that gives skin its color). Most melanomas form on the skin, but melanomas can also form in other pigmented tissues, such as the eye. There are different types of brain and spinal cord tumors. These tumors are named based on the type of cell in which they formed and where the tumor first formed in the central nervous system. For example, an astrocytic tumor begins in star-shaped brain cells called astrocytes, which help keep nerve cells healthy. More than 50% of all diagnosed cases of the disease are lung, breast, colon and rectum, prostate, uterine and ovarian cancers. Depending on the type of tissue from which they develop, tumors are divided into the following groups: carcinomas (formed from ectoderm and endoderm cells), sarcomas (developed from mesoderm cells) and hemoblastoses (tumors arising from cambial cells of hematopoietic and lymphatic tissues). Oncological diseases are the second leading cause of death after cardiovascular diseases. The main and most studied causes of cancer in humans are radiation, chemical carcinogens and viruses. The leading place in the occurrence of cancer in humans (about 80%) is occupied by environmental factors - lifestyle, food products, etc. The rest is caused by diseases that increase the risk of developing tumors and hereditary changes in the genome.

Factors that stimulate the formation of tumors are called carcinogens. They can be divided into three large groups: radiation, chemical compounds and viruses. Ultraviolet, X-ray and gamma rays damage DNA and have a mutagenic and carcinogenic effect. Under the influence of radiation, damage to the DNA molecule can occur. In addition to these, they can also have an indirect effect by increasing the formation of free radicals that damage the genetic apparatus. The high incidence of carcinoma and melanoma in Australia and New Zealand is associated with ultraviolet rays, the increase in leukemia

among Japanese people after the atomic bombings in Japan , and the high incidence of lung cancer in miners working with radioactive ores prove the harmful effects of radiation.

There are many psychological factors, which can lead to development of cancer:

Chronic Stress.

When you are stressed, your body activates the **"fight or flight"** response, releasing stress hormones like **cortisol**, **adrenaline**, and **norepinephrine**. In the short term, this response is helpful. If , it is always "on," it starts harming your body in several ways:

Weakened Immune System. Chronic stress lowers the immune system's effectiveness. Makes the body less able to detect and fight off abnormal (potentially cancerous) cells.

Hormonal Imbalance. Constant high cortisol can disrupt normal bodily functions — digestion, sleep, metabolism, and reproductive systems. It can lead to inflammation, which is linked to many diseases, including cancer.

DNA Damage. Some studies suggest chronic stress may lead to oxidative stress and DNA damage, which increases the risk of cell mutations.

Changes in Behavior. People under chronic stress may engage in unhealthy habits: smoking, overeating, drinking, lack of sleep, avoiding exercise. These behaviors are well-known risk factors for many types of cancer (e.g., lung, colon, breast).

Increased Inflammation. Chronic stress is associated with higher levels of inflammatory markers (like cytokines), which may play a role in tumor development.

Depression.

Depression does not just affect the mind — it impacts the body in very real ways, especially over time:**Weakened Immune System.** Long-term depression can impair immune function. A weaker immune system is less effective at identifying and destroying abnormal cells, including potential cancer cells. **Chronic Inflammation.** Depression is linked to increased levels of **inflammatory cytokines** in the blood. Chronic inflammation is believed to contribute to the development and progression of some cancers (especially colon, breast, and lung cancers). **Hormonal Imbalance.** Depression disrupts the HPA (hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal) axis, increasing cortisol levels (just like chronic stress). This imbalance affects sleep, metabolism, and cell repair processes. **Poor Lifestyle Choices.** Depression can lead to: smoking, alcohol or substance abuse; poor diet, overeating or undereating . Physical inactivity, irregular sleep patterns, these habits increase the risk of several chronic illnesses, including cancer. **Delays in Seeking Medical Help.** People with depression may avoid or delay going to the doctor, getting screenings, or following treatment plans. This can result in late detection of diseases like cancer

Despair and negative attitude towards life.

These mental states do not just stay in the mind — they manifest in the body and behavior:People in despair often stop taking care of themselves — physically and emotionally. **Higher risk of mental and physical illness.** Chronic negativity and hopelessness are linked to: depression, anxiety, sleep problems, weakened immune system, chronic diseases (even cardiovascular issues), increased pain sensitivity. **Negative impact on recovery**. If someone is already ill (e.g., fighting cancer or another chronic illness), despair can worsen outcomes by lowering adherence to treatment, weakening the body's natural healing ability, and draining emotional energy. **Isolation,** people who feel hopeless may withdraw from others, which deepens loneliness — creating a cycle that is hard to break. **Suicidal thoughts,** in extreme cases, despair can lead to suicidal ideation. If you or someone you know is having these thoughts, please know that **help exists**, and things **can change**. Reaching out can be life-saving.

Loneliness and social isolation

Loneliness is not "just a feeling." Long-term, it is like a slow poison to the body and mind. Research has shown it can be as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. **Immune system weakness,** chronic loneliness can lead to increased inflammation and lowered immune response — making the body more vulnerable to illness, even chronic conditions like heart disease or cancer. **Increased risk of depression and anxiety**, lack of emotional support can deepen negative thinking patterns. Leads to rumination ("I'm not enough," "Nobody cares"), which makes people withdraw further. **Disrupted sleep**, lonely people tend to sleep less deeply and feel less rested, worsening mental clarity and emotional resilience. **Higher risk of chronic illness**, linked to high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, and weakened recovery from surgery or illness. Loneliness negatively impacts both mental and physical health. Studies have shown that people with low levels of social support may be at higher risk of developing diseases, including cancer.

At diagnosis, symptoms of depression were predicted by low dispositional optimism, and this path was partially mediated by use of emotion-focused disengagement coping in elderly. Younger age also was predictive of anxiety symptoms at time of diagnosis and this relationship was fully mediated by magnitude of intrusive thoughts. At 3 months, changes in depression symptoms were predicted only by intrusive thoughts. At 6 months, low dispositional optimism reemerged as a significant predictor of changes in depression and again was partially mediated by the use of emotion-focused disengagement coping. Independent effects for problem-focused engagement and disengagement and emotion-focused engagement coping were also found at 6 months. Of course, this is a natural reaction after knowing that you have cancer. However, you should not accept this as the end of your life, despair, or accept that there is no cure. Instead, you should see this as the beginning of a battle between you and cancer. It is necessary to enter this with intensity and strong determination.

Several psychosocial factors, including psychological stress, anxiety, hostility, lack of emotional expression, low overall quality of life, and poor quality of family and romantic relationships, are associated with shorter survival times in patients with breast cancer. The nature of this association is complex, although some studies have found that low quality social support, higher anxiety, and higher hostility are associated with better survival rates.

Conclusion

In conclusion, cancer is a disease that originates in our own body and develops under the influence of external and internal factors. External factors (lifestyle, various types of radiation, etc.) and internal factors (psychological stress and other mental and emotional factors) can slow down the recovery from cancer or accelerate the progression of the disease. However, it is wrong to keep such factors inside in order to minimize them or not show them to others. Sometimes it is useful to let them out. It is natural to be afraid, panic, worry, and get depressed about a cancer. Patients who have been diagnosed with cancer or are undergoing treatment should not worry about how bad the disease is, but rather work on overcoming it. Because depression, anxiety, etc. are not the solution.

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