

Faith an important factor for Saudi Arabian breast cancer patients

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A study of Saudi Arabian women's experiences of breast cancer has found that the women's faith in Allah was a significant element in their culture and helped them cope with the condition.

The study involved patients from early, middle and late treatment phases of the disease and found that the women also had unmet communication needs.

Patients in the early phase of treatment appeared to get more detailed information however, they stressed it was important to have information at every stage of treatment.

Doctors were perceived as more authoritative than female nurses, partly because they were Arabic and spoke the patients' language while most complaints were directed at non-Arabic nurses who could sometimes 'lack tact'.

Reporting the study in the journal *Cancer Nursing Practice*, Howaida Saati said: 'The women's faith fuelled hope that they could be cured. However, they also acknowledged that if Allah chose not to save them then it was his will that they would die from the condition.'

The author added that most women received family support from the time of their diagnosis and throughout treatment and that when nurses and doctors used simple language to convey information, patients reported increased understanding of their condition.

'Findings from this study are encouraging since [socioeconomic factors](#) were not highlighted as major issues in deterring women from seeking care. Cultural beliefs, however, appeared to have a strong influence on acceptance of their condition.

'Consideration should be given to interventions that use women's belief in God to help them cope with illness, such as encouraging patients to seek support from religious organisations or communities,' she added.

More information: Saati, H. (2013) Saudi Arabian women's experiences of breast cancer treatment, *Cancer Nursing Practice*, 12, 7, 34-39.

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