Experience of spouses explored in pre-heart transplant period

7 November 2016

In a review published online Nov. 2 in the Journal of Clinical Nursing, six themes are identified among spouses of heart transplant recipients, some of which are associated with high levels of stress.

Rachel Cater and Julia Taylor, Ph.D., R.N., from the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom, conducted an integrative review to explore the experiences of spouses of heart transplant recipients and to consider how these experiences may inform nursing practice. Nine studies met the eligibility criteria and were included in the review.

The researchers identified six themes: uncertainty, thoughts about death, alterations in lifestyle and priorities, loss of sense of self, quality of life, and coping. Uncertainty relating to survival, increased responsibilities, and changes to lifestyle caused spouses to experience high levels of stress.

*The results reveal that the pre-transplant period is all-consuming for spouses of heart transplant recipients,* the authors write. *"The impact of the pre-transplant wait on spouses' well-being should be recognized by nurses and improvements must be made in support and education available to spouses during the pre-transplant period."*

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