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ABSTRACT

Assessment of Nutritional Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices among Pediatric Oncology Caregivers

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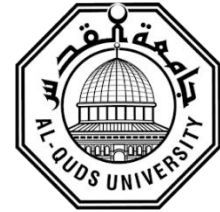
Background: Adequate nutrition in childhood is important for proper neurodevelopment, also it is important for the growth and development of the immune system by supporting it against illness and infections as well as increasing quality of life. Cancer rates are increasing worldwide, and the occurrence of this disease is affected by nutritional factors (diet, nutrition, and exercise). Poor nutritional knowledge, behavior, practices, and awareness of caregivers of children with cancer are disturbing. It has been found that nutritional knowledge might help these patients to adopt healthy eating patterns. In the Middle East generally and Palestine especially, there are few studies on this topic. The study aims to assess nutritional knowledge, practices, and behaviors among pediatric oncology caregivers in Augusta Victoria Hospital and Beit Jala Governmental Hospital.

Objectives:

- To assess nutritional knowledge, practices and behaviors among pediatric oncology patients (aged 2-17 years) and their caregivers.

Specific objective:

- To assess nutritional knowledge in pediatric oncology patients' caregivers.
- To assess nutritional practices in pediatric oncology patients according to their parents' answers.
- To assess nutritional behaviors in pediatric oncology patients' caregivers.
- To assess physical activity status of the oncology patients.
- To determine the socio-demographic status of the oncology patients.
- To determine the factors related to appetite of the oncology patients.



- To compare the nutritional knowledge and behaviors of pediatric oncology patients' caregivers between two hospitals AVH and BJGH?
- To compare the impacts of nutritional practices of oncology patients between two hospitals Augusta Victoria hospital and Beit-Jala Governmental Hospital?

Methods: A cross-sectional study was carried out among Beit- Jala governmental hospital and Augusta Victoria hospital pediatric patients. The study was conducted during the period of 2nd March till 11th may 2022 in which 40 children completed the self-administrated questionnaire by their caregivers. The questionnaire consisted of 6 parts (socio-demographic, nutrition assessment, nutritional knowledge, nutritional practices, nutritional behavior, and child appetite scale). Data were analyzed by using the statistical package for the social software SPSS (SPSS version 23).

Results: The results of the study indicated that mothers are the main attendant for children during the period they receive treatment by 90% during a period of illness extends from 2-4 months by 35%. Both hospitals show a high level of knowledge regarding the healthy lifestyle effect of preventing cancer, increased concerns about nutritional status in children with cancer, and how nutrition affects the progression of the disease. Caregivers had concerns about certain foods they thought it has connection with cancer progression such as processed meat. Sugar, fat, carbohydrates, fruit and vegetables. The disappointing result was about the source of nutritional information that caregivers receive information about nutrition from, the highest percent (50% in AVH, 40% in BJGH) was from the internet, social media, and caregivers of past experience with cancer. Dietitian, appetite, and food choices had a strong effect on children nutritional status. Other factors such as physical activity, weight, and demographic variables influence nutritional knowledge and behaviors.

Conclusion: Assessment of nutritional knowledge, practices and attitudes among pediatric oncology caregivers, emphasized the important role of nutrition in the management of cancer. The findings of this research contribute to a better understanding of the impact of nutritional knowledge, behaviors, practices and attitudes of caregivers on the health of their children with cancer. This research acts as a starting point to guide future studies in Palestine regarding the nutritional knowledge, behaviors, practices and attitudes among pediatric oncology caregivers, and the possibility of a nutrition intervention program for supporting these patients.



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