

QUALITY OF LIFE IN CHINESE PATIENTS WITH BREAST CANCER

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This qualitative study sought to increase understanding of the relationship between cultural beliefs and quality of life (QOL) among immigrant Chinese breast cancer patients in San Francisco. Specific aims were (1) to identify these patients' beliefs regarding cancer, life expectancy, and discussion of advance directives, (2) to explore how these beliefs relate to patient QOL, and (3) to generate hypotheses for further study. No prior studies of QOL among Chinese immigrants with cancer have been conducted in the U.S.

To determine whether Chinese immigrants and American-born Chinese women differ in their cancer-related beliefs and QOL, in-depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 15 breast cancer patients from each group, for a total sample size of 30. Chinese women diagnosed with breast cancer within the past 24 months and no longer under active treatment for this disease were eligible for the study. A telephone screener was administered to women to confirm their eligibility for the study and to screen out foreign-born women who have lived in the U.S. for 15 years or longer.

A written transcript of each interview was prepared in the language of the interview. Transcriptions analysis was first completed by the P.I., Angela sun, and the co-P.I., Dr. Wong Kim, working independently. They then compared results and resolved any discrepancies identified by referring to the transcription(s) in question and discussing the issues involved. Emerging issues were written into memos and re-analyzed to discover new themes, categories, or hypotheses to be studied in future research. Data analysis suggested that there are important differences between American-born and foreign-born Chinese women in their beliefs about, perceptions of, and experiences with breast cancer. These beliefs, perceptions, and experiences may have important implications for cancer support services and survivorship. Both group of women described their breast cancer diagnosis as a wake-up call, to remind them to take better care of themselves. Both groups of women identified cancer support groups as a way helping them to cope with cancer. However, both groups identified a need for additional supportive services especially in-home support services.