

Research Article

Taking good care of myself: A qualitative study on self-care behavior among Chinese persons with a permanent colostomy

Hui Tao, PhD, RN,^{1,2} Praneed Songwathana, PhD, RN,¹ Sang-arun Isaramalai, PhD, RN¹ and Qingxi Wang, Enterostomal Therapist, RN³

¹Faculty of Nursing, Prince of Songkla University, Hat Yai, Thailand, ²School of Nursing, Kunming Medical University, and ³Colorectal Cancer Department, Third Affiliated Hospital of Kunming Medical University, Kunming, China

Abstract

In Chinese culture, as a possible consequence of Confucianism, caring for the sick is considered a moral obligation of family members, while self-care is only the basis of fulfilling filial piety. This qualitative study aims to explore the self-care behavior among persons with a permanent colostomy in a Chinese cultural context of emphasizing the role of family caregiving. Data from in-depth interviews with seven Chinese adults at a university hospital in southwest China were analyzed using content analysis. Informants' self-care behavior was characterized by "taking good care of myself," which underlined individuals' efforts to manage colostomy-related impacts involving: (i) taking care of my colostomy with a proper degree of independence; (ii) taking care of my life by dealing with limitations; (iii) taking care of my mood in a positive way. Findings revealed that informants' self-care behavior was linked to their Confucian beliefs in family obligations, and also influenced by a happy-go-lucky outlook of life, a likely product of Taoism. The information is useful for nurses to design a culturally appropriate care plan to improve self-care behavior and proper family caregiving.

Key words

behavior, Chinese culture, colostomy, qualitative, self-care, stoma.

INTRODUCTION

The formation of permanent colostomy is usually for treating colorectal cancer. According to statistics from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) of the World Health Organization in 2012, in the People's Republic of China it was estimated that there were 253 000 new cases of colorectal cancer, 139 000 deaths, and 583 000 survivors within five years of diagnosis (IARC, 2012). The estimated number of colostomy patients was around 1 000 000 in mainland China, and new cases annually were approximately 100 000 (Wan, 2007).

People with a permanent colostomy encounter physical changes concerning body image, defecation patterns, and sexual function. These individuals have to live with various restrictions involving diet, dressing, physical exercise, recreation, social activity, travel, working, and intimate behavior. Consequently, they may experience psychosocial problems, for example anxiety, depression, disgust, embarrassment, unacceptance, loss of personal control, low value, self-inferiority, insecurity about life, social stigma, and isolation

(McVey *et al.*, 2001; Smith *et al.*, 2007; Li & Zou, 2008; Williams, 2008; Honkala & Berterö, 2009; Andersson *et al.*, 2010; Boyles, 2010).

Previous studies revealed that self-care plays a pivotal role in stoma care and management. Regarded as a conviction that individuals can successfully manage their stomas, efficacy of stoma self-care displayed a positive correlation with both psychosocial adaptation (Bekkers *et al.*, 1996; Simmons *et al.*, 2007) and quality of life (Wu *et al.*, 2007; Cheng & Xu, 2009). Moreover, ability in stoma self-care was positively correlated with psychosocial adaptation (Hu *et al.*, 2010; Xu *et al.*, 2010; Cheng *et al.*, 2013).

The experience of colostomy patients has been explored in different countries during the past two decades (Tao *et al.*, 2014). However, little is known about how people care for themselves in a Chinese cultural context which emphasizing more about family caregiving than self-care. Findings may improve understanding of how cultural factors influence self-care behavior, and inform nursing professionals how to facilitate both self-care and family caregiving in the Chinese cultural context.

Background: Chinese cultural context

Unlike the Western viewpoint which regards self-care as the individuals' responsibility for their own growth and

Correspondence address: Hui Tao, Faculty of Nursing, Prince of Songkla University, Hat Yai 90112, Thailand. Email: taohui216@hotmail.com
Received 18 February 2014; revision received 10 July 2014; accepted 6 August 2014