



Psychological well-being and breast cancer: challenges and perspectives from the "Amazonas de la Esperanza" project

Bienestar psicológico y cáncer de mama: retos y perspectivas desde el proyecto "Amazonas de la Esperanza"

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Dear readers:

Chronic non-communicable diseases constitute a serious health problem for humanity. They cause physical, social and psychological impacts, as well as causing disabilities, as well as irreversible pathological changes.

Among these diseases are malignant tumors, which are the second cause of death in Cuba. Breast cancer in particular is the second most frequent location of malignant neoplasms in Cuban women. In recent years, the morbidity of

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this type of cancer has significantly influenced health indicators and the quality of life of the population; in 2022 the number of deaths was 1 753. ⁽¹⁾

Its diagnosis brings with it a psychological, social and economic impact, due to the relapses and physical disabilities that it entails, as well as irreversible pathological changes. It involves crisis situations that become complex and stressful, both for the person who suffers from it and for the family, generating anguish, worry, anxiety, guilt, anger, depression and feelings of loss with respect to their previous life.

In a person who suffers from this chronic non-communicable disease, negative and unfavorable states for their health will frequently appear, such as fear of death, alteration in their belief system, uncertainty about the course of the disease, danger in achieving vital goals and the loss of autonomy and control, this constitutes a threat to the life project.

State health care is an essential part of the policy of the Cuban Revolution, reflected in the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba. ⁽²⁾ From this perspective, the right and need to prevent diseases in the population is ratified, through the implementation of prevention and health education programs. The guarantee of this right is reflected in Law 41 of the Ministry of Public Health, which ratifies "the expression of the political will of an entire people without discrimination or social exclusion."

It is necessary to address this disease from a multidisciplinary position with an integrative approach, because it is a serious and complex disease that affects all spheres of life. It causes an imbalance in the organization, rhythm and lifestyle of patients and has a psychological impact in its three dimensions: cognitive, emotional and behavioral, both for the person who suffers from it and also for their family and social environment. ⁽³⁾

Therefore, it is necessary to increase and extend the use of interventions in patients with breast cancer, because, after diagnosis, a high number of psychological variables are affected, and only through them can the balance be restored, helping them to recover and accept themselves. This approach has not always been approached from this perspective, since medicine has remained very focused on addressing the biological factors that affect cancer. However, a paradigm shift has occurred that favors the psychological well-being of patients.

This is how the Amazonas de la Esperanza Support Group was created in 2006 (figure 1), with a multidisciplinary approach that aims to address prevention,

assumed according to the WHO, which distinguishes it as a permanent practice of education, respect, encouragement and standards that lead to defining a lifestyle based on freedom and personal growth. ⁽⁴⁾ The definition has a general character, definitively overcoming the traditional medical model focused on the sick, isolated and passive individual.

Currently, the new health paradigm places prevention in a positive perspective, referring to an integrative vision of the human being, to the search for a constant balance. In this way, it aims to promote the physical, mental, social and spiritual integrity of the person, but it also tries to develop and reinforce vital capacities, creativity, the creative adaptation of the individual and his complete development, in harmony with his environment.

From this approach, the "Amazonas de la Esperanza" Support Group addresses dynamics between the person and their circumstances, through the need to make family and social adjustments, and effective communication, promoting necessary social interactions that allow the disease to be perceived as an opportunity for growth and transformation, viewing it as a learning process as well as the development of skills to cope with pain and suffering.

This group contributes to an Extension, Community and Institutional Research Project of the University of Medical Sciences of Matanzas. Among its main achievements, the systematization of actions linked to Primary Prevention stands out, turning patients into Health Promoters once they are rehabilitated.

The authors note important changes in the quality of life, contributing to their psychological well-being from the approach of psychological variables affected after the diagnosis of the disease. Medical Sciences students from the Student Scientific Groups and the Amateur Artists Movement are active members of the project, participating in interventions and promoting health in vulnerable communities. As a result of their work, important achievements are made in research on the subject, which are presented at Scientific Conferences and Publications in Impact Journals.

October 2024 was a month of celebration for "Las Amazonas", the activities carried out, conceived from an integrative approach, make visible an active task in the Matanzas community, from the substantive university processes that articulate science with community change factors in the extra-university community (figure 2).

The challenges and challenges of the project are great, which aims to generalize the creation of support groups throughout the province, where

alliances between multidisciplinary teams and the comprehensive training of the student in connection with this work allow all patients and their families to join in order to achieve a better quality of life.



Figure 1: Logo of the "Amazonas of Hope" Support Group



Figure 2: Activities carried out by the project during the month of October.

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STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

LAT: Conceptualization, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, visualization, writing - original draft, writing - review and editing.

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