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Coping Strategies Associated with High Quality of Life in People Diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis: An Integrative Literature Review

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Coping Strategies Associated with High Quality of Life in People Diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis: An Integrative Literature Review

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Design
- Integrative literature review

Literature Search Strategies
- Databases searched: Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health (CINAHL) Complete, PubMed, PsychInfo, and Academic Search Complete.

Literature Search Limitations and Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria
- Inclusion Criteria:
  - Written in English, from the years 1998 – 2016, and are peer reviewed.
  - Addressed specific coping strategies and their impact on quality of life in those with MS
- Exclusion criteria: did not mention specific coping strategies or if the researchers’ definition of quality of life and its domains was significantly different than the one mentioned previously.

The purpose of this study was to examine the types of coping strategies that have a positive impact on quality of life in individuals diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis.

Lazarus’s Stress, Coping, and Adaptation Theory describes the process of coping and different coping strategies. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) describe coping as a process with dependence on how the individual perceives a threat. An individual experiences stress when he or she encounters something that he or she perceives as taxing or something that exceeds his or her resources. The individual copes with a situation by altering his or her environment relationship while emotion-focused coping changes the meaning of the situation. The result of successful coping is adaptation which is “the capacity of a person to survive and flourish.” Successful adaptation can lead to a feeling of accomplishment and better self-esteem.

Positive Emotion Focused Coping Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coping Strategy</th>
<th>Domain(s) of QOL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seeking social support</td>
<td>Physical, psychological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stopping unpleasant emotions</td>
<td>Psychological, decreases anxiety and depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>Psychological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Releasing emotions</td>
<td>Physical, decreases anxiety and depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining a positive attitude</td>
<td>Physical, psychological</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Positive Problem Focused Coping Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coping Strategy</th>
<th>Domain(s) of QOL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting realistic goals</td>
<td>Psychological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing the situation</td>
<td>Psychological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altering goals</td>
<td>Physical, psychological</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since Multiple Sclerosis is a chronic progressive condition with no cure, it may be difficult to utilize problem focused coping; therefore, emotion focused strategies were used more often.

People may be unable to alter the situation or the stressors themselves so, adopting strategies aimed at changing or addressing emotions can be beneficial.

The psychological domain of quality of life was affected more than any other domain.

Family and friends can provide encouragement, help with physical activities such as cleaning and driving, and provide financial support.

If the individual accepts his or her diagnosis, he or she can then focus on how to manage the condition and any lifestyle changes that need to be made in order to be successful.

Releasing negative emotions can help clear the mind and encourage communication about these emotions with others.

By setting goals, people with MS are playing an active role in bettering themselves which can lead to a feeling of accomplishment and higher self-esteem.

Living with a chronic illness can affect one’s overall well-being and quality of life. Individuals with MS must manage various symptoms and stressors on a daily basis, putting them at risk for poor quality of life.

Utilizing strategies based on acceptance, addressing emotions, and setting realistic goals can help improve the quality of life in people diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis.