MULTIDIMENSIONAL ASSESSMENT OF WOMEN WITH OVARIAN CANCER: INCREASING VALUE OF HEALTH RESEARCH

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Introduction
Since cancer has been conceptualized as a chronic disease, research efforts should focus on health factors for promoting social and psychological adjustment to cancer long-term sequelae. Through several psychophysiological processes, psychological and social factors could also influence the course and prognosis of disease (De C Couk & Vidrion, 2013; Stromberg, 1997). In this perspective, a literature analysis on ovarian cancer has been conducted: Post-traumatic Growth (PTG), coping strategies, body image, social support and Heart Rate Variability (HRV) emerged as valuable and critical variables (Cosentino, 2016; Cosentino & Pruneti, 2015; De C Couk & Vidrion, 2013; Sacerdotti & Koompan, 2010; Shand et al., 2016).

This preliminary study is aimed to understand the mutual relationships between the aforementioned variables in order to gain useful information for future studies on health and well-being interventions.

Results and Discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Coping</th>
<th>Full-Score</th>
<th>Positive Attitude</th>
<th>Orientation to Problem</th>
<th>Social Self-consciousness</th>
<th>Global Self-consciousness</th>
<th>Sexual and Bodily Self-consciousness</th>
<th>Negative Self-concept</th>
<th>Facial Self-consciousness</th>
<th>Physical Distress and Dysfunction</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Emotional Functioning</td>
<td>Quality of Life</td>
<td>Full-Score</td>
<td>Emotional Functioning</td>
<td>Pain</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Post-traumatic Growth</td>
<td></td>
<td>LF/HF</td>
<td>Post-traumatic Growth</td>
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The association between PTG and low-high frequencies ratio (LF/HF) of HRV shows that a prevalent parasympathetic nervous activity (high HF values, low LF values) is related to a higher perceived positive growth, which results from patients struggling with trauma (cancer diagnosis). The personal growth linked to Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) involves the cognition of better interpersonal relations, new possibilities and a greater personal strength. Emotional disclosure (Cafaro et al., 2016) and Social Engagement System (Porges, 2007) could mediate these relationships. Through myelinated vagus nerve, a psychophysiological cascade could reduce metabolic, oxidative and inflammatory processes (De C Couk & Vidrion, 2013). This could have a positive impact on ovarian cancer patients prognosis.

Conclusions
Although this study shows some limits (e.g. small sample size), obtained results suggest new clinical research paths. As far as we know, it is the first time that HRV has been linked to PTG. The latter could promote positive physiological mechanisms that inhibit tumor progression processes. Finally, the hypothesized alloplastic tendency could facilitate an adjustment to the acute period of ovarian cancer by restricting the experience of negative emotions and thoughts.

References

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