

Eiter H, Längle A, Steinert K (2008)

Personal and existential competence of cancer patients. Results of an empirical pilot study on the existential situation of patients during radiotherapeutical treatment.

Do Patients with cancer distinguish in their existential and personal competence to normal people or to patients with other chronic diseases? Is there an influence of age, gender or the interval from Diagnosis? For this study a screening test was selected, that measures the dimension of personal and existential competence, the existential scale.(ESK) This self-assessment questionnaire developed on the basis of V. E. Frankl's anthropology and of Existential analysis, was given to 193 patients with cancer treated with radiotherapy.

RESULTS: The average total value G showed higher scores in the cancer patients in comparison to the normal random sample (G=225/ 214) and especially in comparison to patients with psychiatric diseases (G= 178). It was nearly identical to patients with dialysis.(G=218) Age, gender and the interval from diagnosis did not show any significant influence as did the value of " self-distancing" in young people and in that patients who were in the beginning of their cancer.

CONCLUSION: For coping with situations like this personal-existential factors along with psychodynamic ones seem to be relevant, such as described by Frankl in his books as "defiant power of the human spirit".

The significance of self-distancing in young people one can interpret as good abilities to deal with the new reality to have cancer. Maybe the existence scale will allow to distinguish patients who need psychotherapy.

Key words: *existential analysis, tumour, cancer, coping, Existence Scale*