

## OP 21

### **Psychological Experiences of the Patients with Colorectal Cancer at Apeksha Hospital, Maharagama**

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**Background:** Colorectal Cancer (CRC) is the third most common cancer worldwide and is equally common in men and women. In Sri Lanka, CRC is one of the top five cancers. Being a patient with CRC, patients have different psychological experiences due to the disease condition and the treatment process.

**Objectives:** To describe the psychological experiences of the patients with CRC at Apeksha Hospital, Maharagama.

**Methods:** Eighteen patients with CRC purposefully recruited for this qualitative study. All the patients were within the first two years of their disease and the age limits were 35 to 55 years. They had experienced surgery due to the CRC and undergone at least more than three cycles of chemotherapy. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data and data analysis was done using Colalizzi analysis method.

**Results:** Three themes emerged from the findings as living with uncertainty, constant worrying and making sense of reality. Fear towards death, remaining responsibilities to full fill for their loved ones and fear about the future of their children and spouse caused living with uncertainty. Changes in appearance, repentance about the past lifestyle and inability to accept diagnosis even after years were created the constant worrying. Consider the disease condition as an opportunity to understand the reality of life and identifying the priorities and willingness to fulfil remaining responsibilities as much as possible were created the making sense of reality.

**Conclusions:** Most of the patients with CRC encountered negative psychological experiences. However, amidst these negative experiences some patients have gradually begun to make sense of positive thoughts about life. These findings highlight the importance of regular counselling programs to enhance psychological well-being of patients with CRC.

**Keywords:** *Patients, Colorectal cancer, Psychological experiences*