

# **A Qualitative Study:**

## **Chinese Cancer Caregivers in Sarawak**

Rina Cheong RN (M'sia), Midwifery Div I (M'sia), BSc Honors (Nsg) (UNIMAS)

Zabidah Putit PhD (UK); MHSc( Hons) (NZ); BNSc (Hons) (M'sia); Cert. Ed. (UK);  
Midwifery Div (M'sia); RN (M'sia) Senior Lecturer, University Malaysia Sarawak

This qualitative research explores the experience of cancer caregivers in Sarawak. What are the impacts of cancer to the patient's family members? How did they cope when their relatives were first diagnosed having cancer? What are the coping styles that work for the family while a relative underwent treatment? How could the nurses help and assist the patient and relative while in these states of mind. In this study data were collected from interviews with nine Chinese cancer caregivers. Data obtained were analyzed to gather and capture the experiences of Chinese cancer caregivers. Various themes emerged from the data and highlighted in this paper. These includes "Why me?", Sadness, Acceptance of the Reality, Difficulties Faced by the Caregivers, Family Conflicts, Blames, Suffering, Remembering the Loss, Coping Mechanisms, Supports, Contact with Nurses. Cancer poses great emotional distress and difficulties to the family, in particular those who provide care for their loved ones. The findings of this study emphasized that the provisions of supportive care from the nurses help to alleviate psychological and emotional suffering of caregivers during this intricate time. The oncology nurses can express empathy through recognizing and accepting caregivers' values and beliefs.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Cancer is among the leading cause of death worldwide which accounted 7.9 million deaths in 2005. 72 % of all cancer deaths occur in low and middle income countries. It continues to rise and estimated 12 million deaths in 2030 (WHO, 2010). In Malaysia, the incidence of cancer is on the rise. The latest cancer statistic in Malaysia reported nearly 70,000 new cases were notified from 2003 to 2005 (National Cancer Registry, 2010). Cancer can be a cause for personal crisis. It is one of life's most challenging events. One of the reasons

Although work has been done to provide evidence of the challenges and the impact of cancer that affect the family caregivers, very few research were done regarding

for this is the uncertain outcomes a treatment can have. It is observed that the health care delivery systems are closely worked hand in hand with the patient's family. Consequently, a growing numbers of family members assume the role of informal caregiver. In addition cancer patients often feel the care they received from their family caregiver as the most important resource in their fight against the disease (Chio, Shih, Chiou, Lin, Hsiao & Chen, 2007). This situation highlights the profound and very important role played by the family

the caregivers in Malaysia. As a result, evidence of the effect of good care or lack of, is poorly understood. This highlights the necessity for this kind of