

## Relationship of Spiritual Experiences and Hope with Living in Present among Men with Cancer in Tehran

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### Abstract

**Background and Objective:** Cancer is the third leading cause of mortality in Iran. Along with other interventions, spiritual experiences, hope and living in present are very important among patients with cancer. The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between spiritual experiences and hope with living in the present among men in Tehran in 2016.

**Method:** This descriptive and correlation study was conducted on a sample of 100 men with cancer who were in Tehran by 2016, using available sampling method. The participants completed three questionnaires: Snyder's Hope Questionnaire, Underwood and Tersi's Spiritual Experiences, and Sepahvand and Arab's Living in Present. Data analysis was performed using single-variable and multiple regression analysis and Pearson correlation coefficient. In this research, all ethical issues were observed and the researchers declared no conflicts of interests.

**Results:** The findings indicated a significant positive correlation between hope and living in present time ( $p < .01$ ) and also between spiritual experiences and living in present time ( $p < .05$ ).

**Conclusion:** It seems that therapists need to consider the positive psychological and spiritual role of accepting and improving the treatment of cancer. Spiritual experience which involves communication with God, prayers, and receiving spirituality in life can lead to more congruent behaviors among cancer patients such as finding meaning in life and the experience of living in present. Eventually, these resources can contribute to individual growth and patient empowerment in redefining the disease.

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### Summary

**Background and Objective:** In the current world, cancer causes a lot of problems for people with the disease; in addition, the role of living in the present, hopes and spiritual experiences are of particular importance in examining mental health problems. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between spiritual experiences and hope with living in present. Cancer with more than 100 types of malignant tumors can occur in all ethnic, racial, social, sexual, and economic groups, and all people are susceptible to this disease (1). Cure for cancer almost always begins

with invasive methods, it lasts for months, and side effects can cause mental and psychological problems (2). Given that, spirituality and its growth can be of particular importance to cancer patients. The concept of "spirituality" is defined to cover all matters of life (3). Spirituality in Islam is introduced as a principle, as it is said in the Sura of Nisaa: "Complete your faith and confirm it" (4). Spiritual experiences may not lead to the cure of a disease, but can help the person to feel good, prevent some health problems, and easily make peace with illness and death (5). For cancer patients who are at terminal stage, spiritual and religious comfort may be even more important than physical and mental health (6). Today, psychological problems have

been studied, including depression and life expectancy in the development of physical illnesses, and even their prevention and treatment, since reducing physical illnesses will raise life expectancy, lowering anxiety and tension (5). One of the most prominent features of the faith is the Fear and Hope. This means hoping for the great mercy and divine grace (6). Further, "Hope" is one of the important resources for patients to survive, influencing the attitude of the individual, his health, and possibilities in the future. The results of the research by McClain et al. showed that spiritual health has a strong effect on end-of-life hopelessness in cancer patients (7). Research has shown that living in the present or Mindfulness can also play an important role in improving cancer (8,9). The Mindfulness means paying attention to the present, in a particular, purposeful manner which is free of judgment (10). Mindfulness can be described as "being" or "understanding" that requires the perception of personal emotions (11). Considering the importance of hope and spiritual experiences and their relationship with the being in present in the process of recovery of patients along with dearth of research in Iran, this study has sought to examine the relationship between spiritual experiences and hopefulness with life in the present time.

**Method:** This research is a descriptive-correlational study in terms of purpose and data collection. The statistical population of this study was all the males with cancer referring to the areas related to the treatment of cancer patients in Tehran including Shohada and Imam Khomeini Hospitals, 100 of whom were selected. The required information was obtained, observing the principle of secrecy, the questionnaires were completed. In this study, Snyder's Hope Questionnaire, Underwood and Ters'i's spiritual experiences, and Sepahvand and Arab's living in present were used. The statistical method used in this study was descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and Pearson correlation coefficient and single-variable and multiple regression.

Snyder Hope Questionnaire (2002): Based on Schneider's Hope theory, it is a measure that evaluates hope as a relatively stable personality trait (12). This test consists of 12 items and two subscales of factor thinking and strategies and is utilized on a scale of 8 degrees Likert. The internal consistency of the whole test is from .74 to .84, and the test-retest reliability is .80 (13).

Spiritual Daily Experiences Questionnaire: It was first developed by Underwood & Ters'i (2002) to provide a multidimensional tool of spirituality. This scale has 16 items (14,15) and is used by Likert score method. Cronbach's Alpha Estimation of Internal Stability was .88 for the test, and .92 for the retest.

Living in Present Questionnaire: It was prepared by Sepahvand and Arab in the 2014, and contains 36 items. This questionnaire has been devised to measure life in the present. As for its validity, Cronbach's alpha was 0.78 (16).

**Results:** The results of regression analysis showed that

there is a significant relationship between research variables. In other words, there is a positive and significant relationship between spiritual experiences and living in the present ( $r=.222$ ). Moreover, there is a positive relationship between hope and living in the present ( $r=.337$ ).

**Conclusion:** The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the variables of spiritual experiences and life expectancy with living in present in men with cancer in Tehran. The results of this study showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between hope and survival in men with cancer ( $P<.01$ ). The findings of this study are in line with those of previous studies (18,19). For example, in a study, attending a moment that is reinforced by mindfulness training will reduce negative thoughts and frustrations (17-19). The results also indicate that there is a positive and significant relationship between spiritual experiences and living in the present time in Tehran's male cancer patients ( $P<.01$ ). As one can conclude, rise in each strengthens the other and vice versa. This confirms the research that has shown that spirituality can affect all aspects of the lives of patients, including life in the present (3, 20). The findings imply that the higher the indicators of living in the present time in cancer patients, the higher their level of enjoyment of spiritual experiences and hope. As for the limitations of this study, using the correlation method, the use of questionnaires only, research on men only, which normally limits the generalization of the results, can be noted.

#### Ethical Considerations

##### Compliance with ethical guidelines

The Ethics Committee of Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch has confirmed this research. Ethics Code:930370620

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##### Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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