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I'm more resilient than I ever thought I was: Life after a cancer diagnosis

The incidence of cancer in the UK varies by type. For example, breast cancer is the most common cancer for women in the UK, with around 54,800 new cases diagnosed in 2014 and a rise of around 2% predicted to take place between 2014 and 2035. Ovarian cancer is the sixth most common cancer for UK women; however, the predicted rise is of 15% between 2014 and 2035. A diagnosis of cancer can cause an individual much distress, not only in relation to their own reaction to the news but also in having to negotiate how others might receive their diagnosis. Two studies exploring women's experiences of cancer will be discussed. The first focuses on the effects of a breast cancer diagnosis on women under the age of 50 and their decision not to reconstruct the breast following mastectomy. The second explores the experience for patients of engaging in a yoga intervention following surgery for gynecological cancer. In both studies a qualitative methodology was utilized with data generated through semi-structured individual interviews (breast cancer) and focus groups (gynecological cancer) analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. An idiographic method of analysis, the focus in this approach is on exploring the in-depth accounts generated with the women during the research process. The analysis in both studies highlighted the women's resilience in relation to their experience. Through their individual and joint accounts they discuss their relationships with others, their decision making processes and their development of a new identity following their surgery. Following the research recommendations for practice have been made. The women particularly highlighted a need for engagement with others in similar positions, more discussion of their health issues and less focus on the negative aspects of their diagnosis. They actively demonstrated their positivity in moving to a new normal.

Biography

Jane Montague has completed her PhD in critical social psychology concentrating on relationships a few years ago. Alongside that she worked in several different institutions gaining some lecturing experience. After taking the role of Subject Leader for Joint Honours Scheme students and then moving to Assistant Head of Psychology, she is now working as Head of Psychology in the Faculty of Education, Health and Sciences at the University of Derby. Our subject area is growing rapidly within the School of Science and the University of Derby Online and, along with the three Assistant Heads in Psychology. She is currently having management responsibility for approximately 35 campus-based, members of staff, in addition to a growing number of associate lecturers and online tutors.

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