

Abstract

The main subject of this Diploma Thesis is a description of psychological aspects of social support online among oncological patients. Our intention is to describe the part of social support online in coping with cancer, to describe the process of this support, what are the new benefits of it in comparison with social support face-to-face. We focused also on specific needs of oncological patients in the virtual environment of internet, what are the appreciated issues, what new issues would be welcome.

This Diploma Thesis focuses on dynamics in process of social support online – the formation of interpersonal relations between patients in the environment of the internet, which sometimes develop even into personal meeting face-to-face.

Empirical part of thesis is a mapping research and concerns qualitative analysis of data, which were obtained from semistructured interview with 22 oncological patients.

Based on qualitative research a few conclusions can be drawn. Social support online provides patients informative, emotional and evaluative support. Respondents have mentioned the availability as the main benefit of social support online. The dynamics in the process of social support was captured – at the beginning the cancer patient proper from the other users of web sites. Over time the patient himself is able to offer support for the new users of the web sites. The crucial aspect for respondents turned out to be the one's own personal stories with cancer. Quantitative approach was used only additionally. Two questionnaires were answered – for finding the measure of patients' self-efficacy and for finding the measure of meaning of proper life. The findings of questionnaires are significant, respondents had higher scores of both scales than common population. Statistical significance is the question in regard of low number of respondents. Findings can be suggested for next researches.

Key words

Social support, cancer, interpersonal relationships, social networks, electronic communication, self-help group