Patients: Power sources for cancer nurses

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Background: It’s obvious that cancer nurses have to deal with a lot of different burdens during their everyday work. These burdens are obvious and very well known. If one has an overall view at cancer nursing staff at a ward one will recognise two huge groups: Beginners, which passed their exam recently and colleagues, that are working with cancer patients for more than 15 years and often until retirement. The question which arises is therefore why can these “senior nurses” resist these strains and stay healthy?

Methods: Study of literature focussing on • spiritual, physical and psychological needs • groups (especially cancer nurses) that are known for be on stress • published European Standards regarding physical burden at workplace Own empiric cases from working life, which had a lasting influence Informal interviews with colleagues.

Results: The intensity of work has increased in most clinics: pressure on time, more severe ill patients, complexity of treatment. The working conditions deteriorated considering payment, job confidence, team work and support. Nevertheless, cancer nurses do stay in their workplace for a very long time because of • spiritual background, rituals and general upbringing • resilience • inspiring contacts and interaction with their patients.

Conclusions: With all the burden of and to the care of the patients and their relatives: it is more than coping with their needs. They also give back enormous energy, provided one give space to the moving moments and allow it to draw strength from this particular source.

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