Financial Vulnerability

A case study involving a patient with head and neck cancer

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BACKGROUND: Patients with head and neck cancer (HNC) face unique financial challenges. Even with stable income and health insurance, many patients become overwhelmed with direct and indirect treatment-associated costs.

OBJECTIVES: This article discusses how prolonged financial burden in patients with cancer can result in compromised patient outcomes.

METHODS: A case study is presented that highlights financial burden associated with reduced income, treatment-related commuting, and challenges in resuming a job while dealing with functional impairments and long-term treatment effects from HNC. It also describes the financial impact on a spousal caregiver.

FINDINGS: Nurses must initiate discussions with their patients about potential and actual financial concerns and barriers to care. In addition, nurses should include repeated assessment of financial health throughout the cancer care trajectory and provide appropriate resources and referrals when issues are identified.

KEYWORDS
head and neck cancer; financial hardship; quality of life; cost of cancer

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