

Quality of life related to the health of patients undergoing head and neck cancer treatment.

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BACKGROUND: Cancer is the second leading cause of death by disease in Brazil and its diagnosis and treatment can lead to worsening in the quality of life of the patients. Head and neck cancer, specifically cancer of the oral cavity, larynx and thyroid, has high incidence, prevalence and mortality. Treatment can cause side effects, and/or functional, aesthetic and psychosocial consequences, and could have a direct impact on the quality of life. **METHODS:** Cross-sectional study that aimed to assess quality of life related to health, as well as the influence of sociodemographic and clinical variables in patients undergoing head and neck treatment (the oral cavity, larynx and thyroid), older than 18 years and who underwent surgery and/or chemotherapy, and/or radiotherapy. Two instruments were used to obtain the data: sociodemographic and clinical questionnaire and the Functional Assessment Cancer Therapy Head Neck questionnaire (FACT-HN). This last instrument consists of five domains: physical well-being (BEF), welfare-family (BESF); emotional well-being (SWB), welfare functional (BEFUNC), additional concerns in head and neck cancer (PACP), and three global indices that address the following areas: TOI (BEF + BEFunc + PACP), the FACT-G (BEF + BESF + SWB + BEFunc) and the FACT-HN (BEF + BESF + BEE + BEFUNC + PACP). For the descriptive statistics, the mean (standard deviation) and median (minimum and maximum) for quantitative variables were taken. The association of FACT-HN quality of life scores, with the sociodemographic and clinical variables was verified using Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests. Subsequently, the predictor variables, with significance $p < 0.20$, were selected to be subjected to multivariate analysis, performed by multiple linear regression. Those with p-values lesser than 0.05 remained in the final multivariate model. **RESULTS:** The study included 170 patients. The median results for the TOI, FACTG e FACT-HN were 67(range 18-88), 76 (range 40-97) and 98 (range 50-127) respectively. In regard to the domains, the highest mean scores were the BESF (mean = 22.57, SD = 4.64) and FACT-HN (mean = 96.39, SD = 16.19). The variables that were significant in relation to the quality of life domains regarding the sociodemographic and clinical aspects were: ethnicity, marital status, type of cancer, staging and surgery. Those with simultaneous significance in more than one domain are: sex, educational level; occupation and income. The treatment time variable was significant in every domain of the instrument, except for the B-EE. Head and neck cancer experience has impact on several domains of quality of life, and these can be influenced by clinical and sociodemographic characteristics. The survey results allow to identify which factors should be viewed with utmost care in oncology care. The quality of life of the sample was considered satisfactory.