Abstract Information

Presentation Preference: SNRS Poster Presentation

Abstract Categories: Interest Group: Researchers in Clinical Settings
Thematic Areas: Chronic illness

Introduction: Ventricular Assist Devices (VADs) are being used with increasing frequency in patients with heart failure. VADs are not without adversity, however, as high post-operative morbidity and mortality are of major concern. For those who survive, little is known about the experience from the patients' perspective. The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive study was to gain a better understanding of the experience of living with a VAD.
Through the process of open-ended interviewing, data were collected and analyzed on an ongoing basis to generate conceptual categories. A key informant articulated his experience of living with a VAD through his analogy to Edgar Allen Poe's *The Pit and the Pendulum*. Furthermore, language of co-informants corresponded closely with themes emerging in Poe's short story. During analysis, a consultant from the English Department provided additional analysis of *The Pit and the Pendulum* as it related to each theme.

Results:

Six adults with an average age of 58.8 years participated. Both men were Caucasian; two women were Caucasian and two were African-American. There was wide variation in the length of device implantation. Four key themes: Facing the Unknown, Feeling Confined, Living with Fear, and Hope for the Future emerged.

Discussion:

Comparison of the experience of living with a VAD to the tale of Poe's Narrator does not provide an easy image for nurses who care for this population. Yet, diagnosis of heart failure can, in fact, be a sentence of sorts: a sentence to an uncertain future, physical decline, even to death. The findings of this study can help clinicians to target interventions toward reducing the uncertainty associated with living with a VAD, providing opportunities to reduce the sense of confinement, recognizing and reducing patient fears, and providing and supporting hope for the future through reduction of symptoms and extending life or through providing a peaceful death.

Research Completed: Yes

Abstract History:

-This material has been presented or accepted for presentation in whole or in part at this or another scientific meeting.
-Details: USF (local presentation)

Financial Disclosure:

Have a financial arrangement or affiliation with commercial companies whose products may be mentioned in this material? No

FDA Disclosure:

Cleared: Yes

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