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Perceptions of empowerment among rheumatoid arthritis patients and their health-care providers: A descriptive qualitative study

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Background: Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic condition that causes patients to experience progressive pain, fatigue, loss of bodily function and involve multiple organ systems. Patients who are well informed and have good knowledge about their medication are most likely to have safer and better management of their condition. Studies have shown patients living with chronic diseases who are empowered have better control of their condition. There is currently limited research looking into patient empowerment among RA patients in Asian population.

Objective: To explore the perception of empowerment among rheumatoid arthritis patients and their healthcare providers (HCPs) in Singapore.

Method: This is a descriptive qualitative study using a purposive sampling of adult patients and their HCPs who were recruited from a local healthcare outpatient Rheumatology clinic. The final sample size was determined through data saturation. Data collected from face-to-face interviews and focus groups interviews were analysed using thematic analysis.

Results: The themes that emerged from the patients and HCPs group showed both groups have common themes related to factors that facilitate and inhibit empowerment. Themes that empower patients included: 1) exercising HCPs 'power' to empower RA patient and 2) mobilising resources to empower patients. Themes that negate patient empowerment were: 1) limited health literacy and 2) limitation of healthcare services delivery and funding.

Conclusion: The results show there is a need for intervention to address the gaps in the patients' empowerment level.

Speaker Biography

Siriwan Lim is a Senior Lecturer at Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies (ALCNS), Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore (NUS). She is trained as a Critical Care Nurse, Infection Control Practitioner and Nurse Educator. She is currently pursuing her Doctorate in Philosophy in NUS. Her research areas of interest are chronic diseases and patient empowerment, nursing innovation in education and inter-professional education.

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