

Engagement in everyday life for people with a life threatening illness

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The number of people living with incurable cancer is increasing globally. As effective medical treatments continue to develop this population may live for extended periods of time with incurable cancer. When cure is not possible it is of utmost importance to enable people to engage in meaningful activity and potentially increase quality of life. The present study was initiated with a research interest in how people with incurable cancer engaged in and dealt with activities involved in everyday life. A grounded theory study was conducted and qualitative interviews were performed with 47 people with incurable cancer still living mainly independently at home. In the findings the individuals daily life is characterized by "continuing activity and participation in everyday life" in spite of the individuals experience of progressive loss of ability to function in everyday life. Continued participation was enabled through revised expectations of how to perform activities in everyday life. This gave the possibility to experience positive meaning when participating in daily life. To keep doing regular activities and to do new engaging activities served as a source for experiencing pleasure and competence. The study illustrates the importance of doing and how the motivation to continued participation in everyday life is developed through the experience of doing, which offers the individual the experience of pleasure and competence. The study contributes to the understanding of the meaning of engagement in daily activities for persons dealing with life-threatening illness.