

Illness Beliefs and Self-Care among People with Chronic Diseases: A Review

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Abstract

Chronic diseases are quite enduring often lasting for the entire lifetime. Challenges posed by chronic diseases are different from that of acute diseases where the immediate concern is to save life. In case of a chronic disease the concern is to bring about changes in one's life so as to adjust to the demands of the new situation because chronic diseases pose a lingering threat to one's well being. The long term nature of chronic diseases and limited medication make self-care imperative for people with chronic diseases. Therefore, it becomes important for the person to actively participate in the process of care. Self-care is defined as behaviours to promote health, prevent illness, treat and cope with health problems. In this regard, illness beliefs play a vital role in predicting self care behaviours. Illness beliefs are defined as the organized cognitive representations that patients hold about their illness. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to review researches exploring the relationship between illness beliefs and self-care. The paper describes the alarming threat posed by chronic diseases, importance of self care, concept of illness beliefs and presents a review of literature pertaining to illness beliefs as a determinant of self-care among people with chronic diseases. It can be concluded that there is inconclusiveness regarding the role of illness beliefs and self-care. However, it was found that beliefs influence the illness outcomes, treatment adherence and functional recovery. The review suggests that robust empirical researches in this context are required so that appropriate interventions can be designed for targeting constraining illness beliefs and changing them into facilitative beliefs and promoting self-care among people with chronic diseases.

Keywords: Chronic diseases, illness beliefs, self-care.