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Examining illness narratives with Emotional Graph of Illness Trajectory

Submission date
22/04/2024

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
25/04/2024

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
12/11/2026

Condition category
Surgery

[_] Prospectively registered
[_] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[X] Results
[_] Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol
Background and study aims
Through chronic illness, the continuity of life is disrupted, the narrative coherence of the life story is broken, and this traumatic structured crisis can result in a loss of emotional balance and a negative shift in emotion regulation. It makes it difficult to adaptively cope with the psychological distress and physical symptoms of illness in both the short and long term. The construction of illness narratives can help in building a coherent picture and in adaptive emotion regulation processes. Our objective was to examine the associations of emotion-focused illness narratives with postoperative emotional and mood state, perceived stress, quality of life and illness perception.

Who can participate?
Anyone aged between 18 and 65 years who has undergone surgery for breast, lung, vascular or gastrointestinal disease or cancer and who agrees to take part in the study.

What does the study involve?
The study examines the patients' disease process in terms of changes in emotional state. Based on the patient's narrative, we will determine his/her illness narrative, assess his/her postoperative psychological state and examine whether there is a relationship between postoperative psychological factors and the type of illness narrative.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
The main benefit of participating is the own creating of emotion-focused illness narrative, and the expression of emotions connecting to the illness trajectory. There is no risk of participation.

Where is the study run from?
Department of Surgery, Albert Szent-Györgyi Health Centre, University of Szeged (Hungary)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
September 2020 to May 2024

Who is funding the study?
Department of Surgery, Albert Szent-Györgyi Health Centre, University of Szeged (Hungary)

Who is the main contact?
Tünde Lévai (levai.tunde@med.u-szeged.hu)

Contact information

Type(s)
Public, Scientific, Principal investigator

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Additional identifiers

Study information

Scientific Title
Examining illness narratives in the context of post-operative psychological state: a mixed methods study of the emotion-focused illness narratives.

Study objectives
We use the Emotional Graph of the Illness Process to understand the characteristics of the three types of illness narratives in the context of the postoperative psychological state, and therefore our exploratory research is based on a research question rather than a hypothesis. Our primary research question was: What are the differences between the chaos story, the restitution story and the quest story groups regarding postoperative psychological status?

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 28/09/2020, Regional Research Ethics Committee (RKEB) of the University of Szeged, Albert Szent-Györgyi Health Centre (Dugonics square 13., Szeged, 6720, Hungary; +36 62/545-997; office.rkeb@med.u-szeged.hu), ref: 145/2020-SZTE

Primary study design
Observational

Study design

Observational cross-sectional single-centre study

Study type(s)
Screening

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Psychological state and illness narrative of patients who have undergone surgery

Interventions
All patients are examined within five days of their operation. The test is taken once. During the test assessment, the patient first completes a questionnaire package consisting of the Spielberger State and Trait Anxiety Inventory, Beck Depression Inventory, Perceived Stress Scale, Brief Illness Perception Questionnaire, EQ-5D-3L Quality of Life Questionnaire. Then, the Emotional Graph of Illness Trajectory will be recorded in a semi-structured interview, during which the patient will draw a graph of the changes in emotional state accompanying the illness trajectory. This graph contains numeric data on 0-100% range, which show us the average emotional intensity during the illness process. The emotional intensity belongs to one emotion, elicited by the patient as the most dominant emotion accompanying the disease process.

Intervention Type
Other

Primary outcome(s)
Emotional Graph of Illness Trajectory measured during interview at a single time point

Key secondary outcome(s)
Measured at a single time point:
1. State and trait anxiety: Spielberger State and Trait Anxiety Inventory
2. Depression: Beck Depression Inventory
3. Perceived stress: Perceived Stress Scale
4. Illness perception: Brief Illness Perception Questionnaire
5. Quality of Life: EQ-5D-3L
6. The type of illness narratives, which are identified in the content analysis of the patient interview

Completion date
31/05/2024

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Over 18 years of age
2. A diagnosis of chronic illness or malignant tumour
3. Surgery in the last five days for a chronic disease or cancer
4. Literacy skills to read and write

Participant type(s)
Patient

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group
Mixed

Lower age limit
18 Years

Upper age limit
65 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
42

Key exclusion criteria
Severe psychiatric or neurological illness

Date of first enrolment
01/10/2020

Date of final enrolment
31/05/2024

Locations

Countries of recruitment
Hungary

Study participating centre
Department of Surgery, Albert Szent-Györgyi Health Centre, University of Szeged
Semmelweis street 8
Szeged
Hungary
6725

Sponsor information

Organisation
Albert Szent-Györgyi Health Centre, University of Szeged

Funder(s)

Funder type
University/education

Funder Name
Szegedi Tudományegyetem

Alternative Name(s)
University of Szeged, University of Szeged, Hungary, SZTE

Funding Body Type
Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype
Universities (academic only)

Location
Hungary

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study will be stored in a publicly available repository; [URL: https://osf.io/sytf5].
The data are publicly available through the Open Science Framework. Participants have given their consent for their data to be used for research purposes, and each patient has a serial number instead of a name to ensure anonymity. The publicly available data include patient sociodemographic data, type of surgery, diagnosis, as well as the results obtained from the questionnaires and the numerical results obtained from the Emotional Graph of Illness Trajectory.

IPD sharing plan summary
Available on request

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Results article		14/08/2026	12/11/2026	Yes	No