

Experiencing Uncertainty: Lived Experience of Having Cancer among Patients in Vhembe District of Limpopo, South Africa

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the experiences of patients diagnosed with cancer in Vhembe district, Limpopo Province. A qualitative, exploratory, descriptive and phenomenological design was used. A purposive theoretical sample of patients who were diagnosed with different cancers within 2-5 years in a regional hospital in Vhembe district of Limpopo Province was obtained. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with participants who were in remission phase or undergoing treatment and data saturation occurred after in-depth interviews with eight participants. Field notes were also used during data collection to capture non-verbal communication from participants. The findings revealed that cancer patients experienced a sense of uncertainty, withdrawal and isolation, lack of proper communication and attitudes and adjusting to the existential body changes. Recommendations that are described focused on understanding what it is like to have cancer and filling the gaps of patient's expectations and addressing emotional and physical needs.