

## REVIEW ARTICLE

**Spiritual Needs in Cancer Patients: A Narrative Review**Iyus Yosep<sup>1</sup>, Rohman Hikmat<sup>1</sup>, Linlin Lindayani<sup>2</sup>, Ai Mardhiyah<sup>1</sup>, Taty Hernawaty<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup> Faculty of Nursing, Universitas Padjadjaran, West Java 45363 Indonesia<sup>2</sup> Department of Nursing, Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Keperawatan PPNI Jawa Barat, West Java 40112 Indonesia**ABSTRACT**

**Introduction:** Cancer is a life-threatening disease and causes physical, psychological, and spiritual problems for sufferers. The fulfillment of spiritual needs is one of the important things to improve the quality of life of cancer patients. However, health services still focus on fulfilling the physical aspect. So that comprehensive data is needed regarding the spiritual needs of cancer patients. The purpose of this study was to comprehensively explore the fulfillment of spiritual needs in cancer patients. **Methods:** this study uses the Narrative Review method. Literature review through Ebsco, Pubmed, Science Direct, Sage Journals, and Google Scholar databases. The keywords used in English are "Spiritual needs OR Spirituality OR spiritual care" AND "cancer" AND "patient". While the keywords in Indonesian used are "spiritual needs OR spirituality OR spiritual care" AND "cancer" AND "patient". **Results:** We found 10 articles with different aspects of fulfilling spiritual needs. 4 articles on aspects of the meaning of life and purpose, 2 articles on aspects of strength in belief, 3 articles on spiritual aspects with peace, hope, and gratitude, and 1 article on aspects of connection with the category of social support. **Conclusion:** There are 4 aspects of fulfilling spiritual needs that are felt by cancer patients, namely the meaning of life and purpose, strength in belief, spirituality with peace, hope, and gratitude, and connection with the category of social support.

**Keywords:** Cancer, Spiritual Needs, Patients**Corresponding Author:**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Cancer is a noncommunicable disease caused by the uncontrollable growth of an abnormal mass of body tissue cells; the growth can spread to surrounding organs (1). Every year, the prevalence of cancer as a chronic disease rises. According to Basic Health Research data from 2013, the prevalence of cancer reached 1.4 per mile in 2013 and increased to 1.8 per mile in 2018. According to the most recent data from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) and the World Health Organization (WHO), the global number of cancer sufferers increased by 18.1 million new cases, with 9.6 million cancer patients dying (2). Physical problems, psychological problems, and spiritual problems are all common in cancer patients (3). Pain, fatigue, decreased physical condition, and continuous fatigue are common side effects of physical problems experienced by cancer

patients (3). Furthermore, psychological problems that arise in cancer patients include low self-esteem, depression, shock, fear of recurrence and death, apathy, anxiety, and grief. If these conditions are not addressed immediately, they will worsen the patient's condition (4). While self-esteem issues, spiritual trust issues, self-distrust, impaired personal relationships due to lack of confidence, and decreased quality of life are common spiritual problems (5).

Cancer has a wide-ranging impact, affecting all aspects of one's life, including physical, psychological, social, and spiritual well-being. However, health-care efforts are still typically focused on treating disease or dealing with physical problems (3). Patients with advanced cancer who are nearing the end of their lives. Spiritual needs are valuable. It is critical to provide spiritual care to patients who are nearing the end of their lives (6). According to (7), patient spirituality is the only way for the patient's healing process. Furthermore (8) claims that patients require assistance with a significant portion of their spiritual needs. Currently, the needs of patients and families for spiritual care and religiosity have increased,

particularly in cancer patients in the final stages of life who are searching for purpose and meaning in life (9).

The relationship between the individual and the Creator is defined as spirituality. The spiritual aspect of humanism refers to an individual's expression of the meaning and purpose of each life process toward oneself, others, and God (9). Individuals can experience spirituality through meditation, nature, and art as a link to reality that gives life meaning (10). Praying is one way to improve one's spiritual connection with God (11). Spirituality, according to (12), is personal or individual, with each individual having his or her own understanding that is influenced by culture, development, life experiences, and individual perceptions of life. (13) discovered that when it came to meeting spiritual needs, patients frequently denied why they had cancer, refused to accept their condition, and feared death. Another study, conducted by (3), demonstrates that the dimension of religion is the highest level of presentation required for spiritual

needs. Nurses can learn what needs have been met and what needs have not been met and must be met by the patient through this assessment, because each individual's spirituality is influenced by their perspective and background (14). Individual spiritual needs will adjust to their specific circumstances. Thus, this study aimed to conduct a literature review on the spiritual needs of cancer patients based on the information presented above.

## METHODS

This study uses the Narrative Review method with a qualitative descriptive approach. The protocol used is PRISMA flowchart diagram and article quality assessment using The Center for Review and Dissemination and the Joanna Briggs Institute Guideline. While the literature search strategy used in this research is to analyze the inclusion and exclusion criteria that have been determined based on the language, type of article, population and sample, and year of publication in each article (Table I).

**Table I : Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English and Indonesian	No English and Indonesian
Article Types	Full text, free access, research article, and review article	Abstract article, not free access, not research articles and review articles
Population and sample	Patients diagnosed with cancer	No cancer
Outcome	Spiritual needs of cancer patients	Not aiming to fulfill spiritual needs
Publication Year	Last 10 years (2013-2022)	More than last 10 years

**Table II : Characteristics of included studies**

Author, year	County	Study design	Sample	Results
Ahlam Al-Na-tour, Sharaf Mohammed Al Momani, Abeer M A Qandil (2017)	Yordania	Descriptive qualitative	50 Jordanian women with breast cancer at King Hussein Cancer Center.	A positive linear relationship was found between spirituality and QoL, $r = 0.67$ , $p = 0.000$ . The highest score of correlation was seen between spirituality and the functional domain, $r = 0.63$ , $p = 0.000$ . Spiritual intervention could contribute to increased functional, social, and physical well-being and enhance the total health and QoL of women diagnosed with breast cancer.

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Author, year	County	Study design	Sample	Results
Alan B. Astrow, Gary Kwok, Rashmi K. Sharma, Nelli Fromer, Daniel P. Sulmasy, (2018)	Yordania	Descriptive qualitative	727 racially/ethnically and religiously diverse outpatients.	Spiritual needs are common in an ethnically, religiously, and linguistically diverse cancer patient population but may differ by cultural background. High levels of spiritual need are associated with lower levels of satisfaction and diminished perception of quality of care. Training clinicians to address patients' spiritual concerns, with attention to cultural differences, may improve patients' experiences of care.
Ashraf Khoramirad, Maryam Mousavi, Ahmineh Dadkhahtehra, Davoud Pourmarzi (2015)	Iran	cross-sectional study	80 participants with Breast Cancer	There is no significant relationship between sleep quality and spiritual well-being in patients with breast cancer
Rassouli et al., 2015	Iran	Descriptive qualitative	18 cancer patients	4 themes : Connection Seeking peace Meaning and purpose Transcendence
Phenwan et al., 2019	Thailand	Descriptive qualitative phenomenology design.	16 women with Palliative Performance Scale more than 50	Three themes emerged with five subthemes: (1) feeling life worthwhile, (2) sense of belonging in the community, and (3) feeling connected to the nature. Conclusions: For Thai women, who have breast cancer, their spirituality focuses on family, mainly their children.
Bai et al., 2016	USA	randomized clinical trial	52 cancer patients	revealing contrasting relations of faith with QOL. Cluster 1, Cluster 3, and Cluster 4 represented high, medium, and low levels of overall QOL, respectively, with correspondingly, medium, and low levels of peace, meaning, and faith. Cluster 2 was distinguished from other clusters by its medium levels of overall QOL, peace, and meaning and low level of faith
Forouzi, et al. (2017)	Iran	correlational study	150 eligible cancer patients who were hospitalized in the oncology wards and outpatient clinics.	the total mean score of spiritual needs was (64.32 ± 22.22). Among the categories, the lowest score belonged to "morality and ethics" component (2.18 ± 1.64), and the highest score belonged to "positivity/gratitude/hope/peace" component (15.95 ± 5.47). The mean score of QoL was (79.28 ± 19.20). Among the categories, the lowest score belonged to "global health status" component (8.44 ± 3.64), and the highest score belonged to "functional" component (36.57 ± 10.28). Pearson correlation coefficient showed that spiritual needs score positively correlated with QoL (r = 0.22; P = 0.006).

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Author, year	County	Study design	Sample	Results
Paredes, A. C. & Pereira M. G. (2017)	Portugal	Descriptive quantitative	100 women, aged between 25 and 78 years diagnosed with breast cancer	an association between PTG, spirituality and distress. Women with a longer diagnosis and recurrence showed more distress. Younger age, recurrent cancer and spirituality predicted higher posttraumatic growth (PTG). Patients' spirituality should be part of intervention with breast cancer patients since it seems to be related to greater growth and adjustment to the illness.
Seyedrasooly, et al. (2014)	Iran	descriptive-correlational study	15 Cancer Patients	Participants reported positive perception about the prognosis of their disease (score 11 from 15) and rated their spiritual well-being as high (score 99 from 120). There was a positive correlation between the perception of prognosis and spiritual health among cancer patients
Bai, et al. (2014)	Yale–New Haven	a secondary data analysis of a cluster randomized clinical trial	52 patients with advanced cancer after 100 days since the diagnosis at one and three months post-baseline.	SpWB and QoL remained stable between one and three months post-baseline, which were a median of 112 and 183 days after diagnosis, respectively. SpWB was found to be associated with QoL more strongly than physical and emotional well-being. Peace and Meaning each contributed unique variance to QoL, and their relative importance shifted over time. Faith was positively related to QoL initially. This association became insignificant at three months post-baseline.

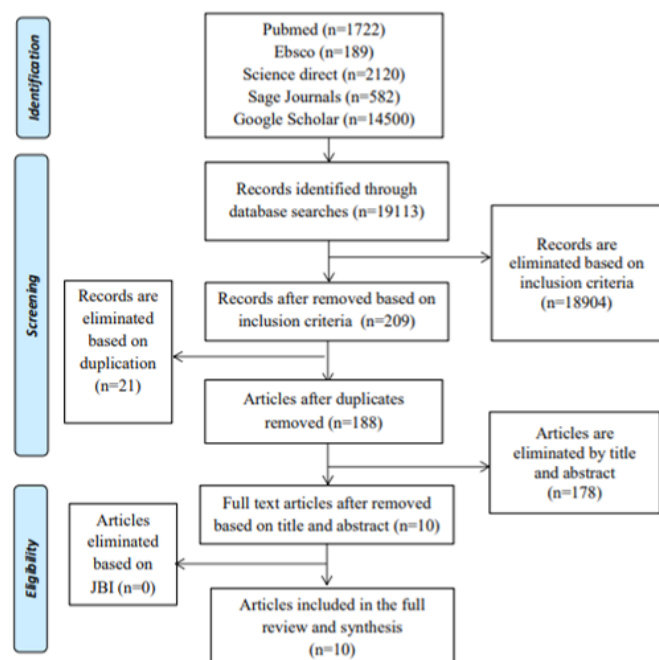


Figure 1 : PRISMA Flow Diagram.

This study uses electronic databases, namely CINAHL (EBSCO), science direct, sagejournal, pubmed, and google scholar. The keywords used in English are “Spiritual needs OR Spirituality OR spiritual care” AND “cancer” AND “patient”. While the keywords in Indonesian used are “kebutuhan spiritual OR spiritualitas OR perawatn spiritual” AND “kanker” AND “pasien”. The data obtained were extracted manually and analyzed descriptively.

**RESULTS**

The number of articles obtained from the search is 19113 articles (Figure 1). After adjusting to the inclusion criteria, 209 articles were obtained. Further duplication was done and the remaining 188 articles. Then after checking the title and abstract, 10 articles were obtained. All articles describe the fulfillment of spiritual needs in cancer patients, several articles identify the relationship of spiritual needs fulfillment to the quality of life of cancer patients.

Researchers identified from articles with the main focus on the spiritual needs of cancer patients. There are 10 articles that meet the inclusion criteria with research methods, namely qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods with the aim of knowing the

fulfillment of the spiritual needs of cancer patients. Broadly speaking, the results of the review show 4 major themes on the fulfillment of spiritual needs, namely the meaning of life and purpose (15–18), strength in belief (19,20), spirituality with peace, hope, and gratitude (21–23), and Connections with category of social support (24).

The results of the article review show that there are 4 major themes in fulfilling spiritual needs, namely the meaning of life and purpose, strength in belief, spirituality with peace, hope, and gratitude, and connection with the category of social support

## DISCUSSION

### Meaning of Life and Purpose

The results of the research by (16) stated that spirituality is an important component of humans and palliative care can affect the quality of life of patients both physically and psychologically. The patient will interpret the life processes that occur and focus on the patient's life goals. Meanwhile, the results of research by (18) state that the fulfillment of spiritual needs can make patients accept and strive to overcome their illness. As many as 59% of patients with cancer consider themselves to be spiritual but not religious. At least one spiritual need reported by 79% is a spiritual need for meaning in life, so that positive perceptions emerge in the treatment process. The research of (17) shows that the fulfillment of spiritual needs by creating peace and meaning in life contributes a lot in creating quality of life and is of major importance for patients with terminal illnesses. Faith is positively related to the quality of life of patients who are increasingly enthusiastic about living the life process.

### Strength in Belief

Research by (19) shows that spirituality is an important aspect in humans, because it can improve functional, social, physical well-being, and can be a source of strength to help improve the quality of life and meaning of life in cancer patients. Patients also believe that God will give them strength so they believe that they will recover from their illness. Research (20) stated that there was a positive perception of the illness they suffered and judged that their spiritual well-being was high. So that there is a relationship between spiritual well-being and positive beliefs that patients have about their disease. However, some patients only have a positive perception at the beginning of the spiritual treatment period, after 3 months of carrying out the treatment the patient begins to decrease their belief that God will give them strength to face their illness.

### Spirituality with peace, hope, and gratitude

Fulfillment of spiritual needs is one of the efforts

so that patients can feel calm, peaceful, and grateful for every incident. So that patients have hope in dealing with cancer. The results of research by (21) stated that the fulfillment of spiritual needs can improve the quality of life of cancer patients. In addition, there is also an increase in a sense of peace, meaning in life, and belief in God. So that in the process of health care, they are able to build a sense of peace and follow the flow of care. Meanwhile, based on research by (22), it is stated that there is a relationship between spiritual well-being and the patient's faith and quality of life. This can reduce the number of depression and anxiety in patients so that there is peace in carrying out the treatment process. Another study stated that the majority of cancer patients in Iran with sleep disorders after being met with spiritual needs, patients believe more that they will get a lot of strength and support from God and more believe that there is some real purpose for their life to have a better quality of sleep. Other data shows that those who frequently attend mosques or places of worship have a higher quality of sleep. This shows that the fulfillment of spiritual needs can give meaning to life, confidence to get support and help from Allah, and attendance at mosques or places of worship may be useful for improvement (22).

### Connections with category of social support

Based on research by (24) the role of social support from the environment is very important to understand and deal with adjustment to cancer, social support will make patients better respond to the care provided. spirituality can improve the patient's quality of life through improved coping and social support. Cancer patients diagnosed long ago will show a recurrence so that they feel more miserable. Social support from the family becomes a means to build enthusiasm in dealing with the illness.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the literature review show that in each article there are 4 aspects of fulfilling the spiritual needs of cancer patients. The 4 aspects are meaning in life and purpose, strength in belief, spirituality with peace, hope, and gratitude, and connection with social support categories. These four aspects can also improve the quality of life of cancer patients for the better. The suggestion from this study is the need for further research on the effectiveness of spiritual therapy on the quality of life of patients with cancer. Through this research, researchers can identify deeper information about spiritual healing in cancer patients.

### What is known?

Cancer has a wide-ranging impact, affecting all aspects of one's life, including physical, psychological, social, and spiritual well-being. Patients with cancer require assistance with a significant portion of their spiritual

needs. Individual spiritual needs will adjust to their specific circumstances. As a result, the first step that can be taken is a spiritual evaluation of the patient.

#### What it contributes?

The results of the article review show that there are 4 major themes in fulfilling spiritual needs, namely the meaning of life and purpose, strength in belief, spirituality. This study could have a significant contribution to nurse regarding the needs have been met and unmet among patients with cancer

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