

The Phenomenon Of Suffering In Oncology Nursing: An Arts- Informed Inquiry Of Margaret Edson's Play Wit

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Abstract

Suffering, a universal lived experience, is often experienced by persons living with and dying from cancer. Suffering impacts the person as a whole and can profoundly impact their health and quality of life. Nurses guided by the humanbecoming school of thought (Parse, 1998, 2007, 2008), a human science nursing theory, are concerned with universal lived experiences, health and quality of life from the perspective of the person (Parse, 1998). Given that art has the ability to convey glimpses of the human experience, beyond that which can be articulated in words (Mitchell & Cody, 2002), it can directly inform nursing practice. Through these glimpses we can come to new understandings of human experiences, including that of suffering in cancer. Margaret Edson's (2008) Pulitzer Prize winning play *Wit*, and the corresponding 2001 motion picture, describe one woman's experience of living her dying from advanced ovarian cancer and her relationship with her primary nurse. Through dwelling with both renditions of this play, and the relevant literature, understandings emerge about suffering. These understandings provide insight into the humanbecoming theoretical theme of cotranscendence (Parse, 1998, 2007), and on how nurses can bear witness to persons who are suffering. These ideas are further explored and expressed reflectively and pre-reflectively through the artform of poetry. Additional insights are discussed regarding art and its role in scholarship, clinical practice and education.

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