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**EXPERIENCES OF PATIENTS REGARDING ONCOLOGY
TREATMENT AND CARE AT HOSPITALS IN VHEMBE
DISTRICT OF LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

by

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ABSTRACT

Cancer is an emerging public health problem in Africa. The numbers are projected to nearly double (1.28 million new cancer cases and 970,000 cancer deaths) by 2030 simply due to the aging and growth of the population. This study explored and described the experiences of patients regarding treatment and care at the hospitals in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province.

A qualitative approach explorative, descriptive and phenomenological was used. The target population were patients undergoing cancer treatment in the five hospitals in Vhembe District. A purposive sampling of the hospitals that have oncology clinics for cancer patients under their care were selected and convenience sampling of participants. Unstructured, in-depth individual interviews were used to collect data. Trustworthiness and ethical considerations were followed to protect the study participants.

The following findings emerged: Participants' feelings of uncertainty about their cancer and treatment, lack of communication, lack of communication and fear of death, experiences of distress due to treatment side effects and lack of communication of cancer diagnosis to family members, social support and the burden of care giving, diverse experiences of support by health care institutions and poor coordination of treatment, positive feelings of self, participants benefiting from treatment and care expressed their trust in the supernatural, fate and belief system as their coping mechanisms. Recommendations were made to assist in the improvement of cancer services in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province.

Keywords: oncology, cancer risk factors, diagnosis, care, treatment, symptomatic experiences