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THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF

ADULT PATIENTS COMMENCING RADIOTHERAPY

AND/OR CYTOTOXIC CHEMOTHERAPY

THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

IN NURSING AT MASSEY UNIVERSITY

ALAN WILLIAM WILSON

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Abstract

A Phenomenological Study Of The Lived Experience Of Adult Patients Commencing Radiotherapy And/Or Cytotoxic Chemotherapy

This study describes the lived experience of seven adult patients commencing radiotherapy and/or cytotoxic chemotherapy as outpatients at a regional cancer centre. Due to the long distances between their homes and the centre, six of the patients stayed in an oncology hostel during their treatment.

A phenomenological research method was used to describe the lived experience of these participants. Data analysis involved the development of themes from thematic statements, and a description of the central phenomena.

The central phenomena identified is the concept of "walking alongside" one's normal lifeworld. There is a strong theme in the lifeworld of lived time through "counting up, down or through" treatments and this provides a basic measurement of the "distance of the trip" of radiotherapy or cytotoxic chemotherapy treatment. Links to normality are sought by patients and are important if the patients are to return to their pre-treatment lifeworld.

By improving health professionals understanding of the experience of having radiotherapy or chemotherapy, they will be better able to support patients through the experience of having these treatments. Patients stand to benefit from health professionals understanding the experience of patients commencing radiotherapy and/or cytotoxic chemotherapy and assisting patients through facilitating this trip.
Completion of a Masters Thesis requires the support and contributions of others. Firstly, to the patients who agreed to participate in the study, thank you for giving me your time, and for being willing to share very personal aspects of your life experience with me and others. Through this sharing we are able to know more about the experience of commencing radiotherapy and/or cytotoxic chemotherapy.

To the medical, therapeutic radiography, and nursing staff, I was continually aware of the major role that you play in making the experience of these patients a positive one. In addition to technical excellence, the highly human perspective you hold as caregivers contributed to the patients' experiences and hence my research.

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