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The Quantitative Association between Hope, Meaning and Psychological Resilience in a National Sample of Caregivers of Patients with Cancer

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Background: The independent associations between hope, meaning and psychological resilience has been described qualitatively in cancer caregiver samples, but there is a lack of research that assesses this connection quantitatively. The purpose of this study was to explore the quantitative link between hope, meaning and psychological resilience in a national sample of caregivers of patients with cancer.

Methods: We developed a psychosocial survey and recruited a national sample of cancer patient caregivers through Qualtrics Panels, an online data recruitment service. A standard multiple regression model was developed in which psychological resilience was the outcome variable and hope, and the presence and search for meaning were the independent variables. Covariates included age, gender, marital status, employment status, years caregiving and emotional and instrumental social support.

Results: We collected data from 500 participants and, data from 467 participants was included in the final analysis after screening for outliers. Of respondents included in the analytic sample, 61% were female, 88% were white, 77% were married, and 72% reported having employment. The primary patient diagnoses reported by caregivers were breast cancer 21%, lung cancer 15%, gastrointestinal cancers 15% and hematological cancers 8%. The overall model was significant $F(10, 456) = 65.55, p < .001$, and accounted for almost 60% of the variance in psychological resilience ($R^2 = 58.97$). After adjustment for covariates, significant predictors of psychological resilience included hope $\beta = .49, p < .001$, the presence of meaning $\beta = .24, p < .001$ the search for meaning $\beta = .10, p = .002$ and years caregiving $\beta = .07, p = .02$.

Conclusion: These results indicate that hope, the presence and search for meaning in life and years caregiving are independently associated with psychological resilience among caregivers of patients with cancer. The strength of the connections between hope, the presence and search for meaning in life and psychological resilience suggests that these are important factors in psychological resilience.

Clinical Implications: Caregiver perceptions of hope and meaning in life are potentially modifiable factors that could be intervened upon to bolster psychological resilience in caregivers of patients with cancer.