Surgical Weight Loss as a Life-Changing Transition: The Impact of Interpersonal Relationships on Post Bariatric Women

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INTRODUCTION

Women who have undergone bariatric surgery may experience life-changing transitions both physically and psychologically. Although there seems to be adequate postsurgical physical care following bariatric surgery, there often is a lack of psychosocial support for these patients. Many transitions in post bariatric woman experiences will affect her and her relationships with others.

PURPOSE

This phenomenological qualitative research study explored the lived experience of women transitioning in the interpersonal relationships post bariatric surgery.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Women account for 80% of those having weight loss surgery.

As physical and psychosocial changes related to bariatric surgery are closely interwoven, it challenges healthcare providers to detect patients who are at risk of continuing psychosocial distress.

Since bariatric surgery results in rapid changes in weight loss, creating a new body image, more qualitative research is needed to determine how to manage the complex psychosocial experiences that accompany this transformation process.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Experiencing Transition Theory (Resch & Ilkin, 2010)

Transition is a central concept integral to the nursing care of bariatric patients.

About transition experiences are the result of critical turning points of events.

METHODS

DESIGN

A semi-structured interview, with a list of four questions to be covered with each participant, encouraged women to tell their story in their own words, providing rich and in-depth data.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR BARIATRIC RESEARCH STUDY

- Can you describe your family relationships were like during the first six months of having had your weight loss surgery?
- How would you describe the care your spouse and/or immediate family members gave you during your recovery period after your weight loss surgery?
- As a post bariatric patient adjusting to your new diet and physical transformation, from whom did you draw the most emotional support to help you through this?
- Can you describe any situation where you were surprised by the effect your weight loss transformation may have had on your relationships with the people in your life?

DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis method

The six phases included:
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

FINDINGS: THEMES/THEME CLUSTERS

EXPERIENCING SUPPORT/NEGATIVITY

- Supportive Family, Friends and Coworkers
- Significance of Bariatric Support Group
- Social Media Support
- Relationship Adjustments
- Misinformation

CONNECTING.socially

- Adjusting Eating Patterns
- Men and Dating

INSPIRING OTHERS

- EMBRACING A NEW SELF
  - Loving Yourself
  - Gaining Emotional Strength
  - Staying In The Fight
  - Feeling Alive Again

CONCLUSIONS

- To ensure bariatric surgery patients receive ample postoperative support from family and friends, it is important to inform those they trust, prior to surgery, with their plan for surgery and potential needs after.
- Attending bariatric support group meetings before and as well as after bariatric surgery, is conducive to gaining peer support, encouragement and helpful information to aid in the weight loss journey.
- Social media serves as an important vehicle for recovery and support for bariatric patients.
- Post bariatric women can successfully adjust to eating out.
- Within the first year post bariatric surgery, women will begin to gain emotional strength and “feel alive again”.

NURSING IMPLICATIONS

Nurses can implement a support group mentorship pairing program between pre-bariatric women and motivated women who are six months or more post-bariatric surgery. This can help foster adequate emotional support through the bariatric surgery journey for both.

Nurses can encourage women to attend support group meetings, which is an essential part of the post bariatric women’s weight loss journey.

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