

ABSTRACT

This research is a small-scale, qualitative research study conducted with 24 participants, to understand what peer support can provide for Norwegian men who are undergoing cancer treatment. A triangulation of research methods has been used. With the help of the Norwegian Cancer Association, action research was done with three groups of men in Bergen, Trondheim and Oslo. An ethnographic study was conducted with the first group in Bergen, and semi-structured interviews were done with each group after each cycle had ended. Areas of literature that are relevant to the research, concerning men's experiences of peer support, gender in health care and family therapy with families experiencing physical illness have been reviewed.

Systematic text condensation was chosen as the method of analysis. The findings showed how the men in this research construct their lives, post-cancer treatment, in line with their preconceptions of Norwegian masculine values. The men felt alone in their illness, and the group contributed to cohesion, increased coping and improved psychological well-being. It was found that the participants were concerned that women in the group would make it difficult to use masculine approaches in the conversations.

The research suggests professionals need more knowledge of how gender influences the experiences of illness, and of how peer support can supplement cancer care. The knowledge arrived at in this research adds to professional understanding of men's needs in rehabilitative work, and to how professionals may be able to support families after cancer treatment.