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Coping with cancer and adversity : Hospital ethnography in Kenya

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Appendix 4: Nutrition counselling guide for cancer patients

Counselling session for Mr and Mrs. Jabari

Monday, 13th February 2006

The nutritionist invites Mr. Jabari and his wife for a counselling session. Mr. Jabari (49) is taking the second course of chemotherapy for cancer of the colon. Mr. Jabari's wife is a teacher by profession and is able to follow the counselling in English. The nutritionist often talks to patients and relatives separately and together in *ad hoc* or arranged sessions. The nutritionist advises relatives and patients about the appropriate diet during treatment. During the fieldwork, there was a handout, which the nutritionist went through together with the clients during the counselling sessions. Apart from the talk on balanced diet and the side effects of cancer therapies the nutritionist attempt counselling on how patients and relative should cope with the reality of the disease. The nutritionist explains what food to eat or avoid in case of particular side treatment side effects. A balanced diet chart and a nutrition handout, which the nutritionist signs and gives to a patient or his/her a family member, are handy during the session.

Below is the main handout the nutritionist goes through with some patients and/or their relatives.

Due to the treatment you are receiving, you may experience some of these symptoms:

1. Nausea and vomiting
2. Loss of appetite and weight
3. Loss of taste and/or taste changes
4. Soreness of the mouth
5. Diarrhoea
6. Constipation

To relieve the symptoms, do the following:

- 1.) Nausea and vomiting
 - a) Have small frequent meals, alternating dry and fluid feedings.
 - b) Eat promptly when hunger is first felt.
 - c) Keep away from cooking smells-where possible let some one else cook for you.
 - d) Avoid fatty and sugary foods (may add in moderation for extra energy if underweight).
 - e) Avoid liquids at meal times. Take liquids 30-60 minutes after or before meals.
 - f) For early morning nausea, try unbuttered bread or plain biscuits.
 - g) Try cold foods-they have less smells.
 - h) Avoid lying flat and at least two hours after eating.
 - i) Use anti-emetics before meals (but a doctor must prescribe them for you).