

# Acceptance of illness and worry about dying and their association with faith and family support among advanced cancer patients

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## Background:

Advanced cancer poses multifaceted challenges that extend beyond the physical realm, encompassing psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions. The Filipino culture is characterized by strong familial bonds and deep-rooted faith, which are integral to the coping mechanisms of individuals facing life-threatening illnesses. Understanding how these cultural values influence the acceptance of illness and concerns about dying is crucial for providing culturally sensitive and effective palliative and end-of-life care.

## Objective:

The study aimed to determine the independent associations of acceptance of illness and worry about dying with various sociodemographic & psychological characteristics, family support, and faith factors among advanced cancer patients.

## Methods:

This is a cross-sectional study among 195 advanced cancer patients seen at the Cancer Institute of a major hospital in Metro Manila, Philippines. Participants completed the Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy (FACT) and Hospital Depression and Anxiety Scale (HADS) questionnaires. Separate univariate analyses using the Chi-square test were performed for acceptance of illness and worry about dying.



## Results:

The majority (87.2%) of the sample accepted their illness, and many (41.6%) were not worried about dying at all. Having a college education, good emotional support from family, finding strength in one's faith/spiritual beliefs, and having one's faith/spiritual beliefs strengthened by difficult times were significantly associated with acceptance of illness. Finding strength in one's faith/spiritual beliefs and knowing that things will be okay even during difficult times were significantly associated with not worrying about dying.

## Conclusion:

To our knowledge, this is the first study that examined the association between faith, family support, acceptance of illness, and worry about dying among Filipino advanced cancer patients. The findings can inform healthcare professionals about the importance of incorporating spiritual and family-centered interventions into the care of advanced cancer patients. This may include integrating faith-based support or involving family members in the care process.

**Table 1. Univariate Analysis of the Association Between Acceptance of Illness and Socio-Demographic, Psychological, Family Support, and Faith Characteristics of Advanced Cancer Patients**

Characteristics	Acceptance of Illness n (%)			p-value
	Not At All	Somewhat	Very Much	
Education				0.007*
College and higher education	1 (25.0)	18 (85.7)	143 (84.1)	
Gets Emotional Support From Family				0.005*
Not at all	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.6)	
Somewhat	0 (0.0)	5 (23.8)	6 (3.5)	
Very much	4 (100.0)	16 (76.2)	163 (95.9)	
Finds strength in one's faith or spiritual beliefs				0.001*
Not at all	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (2.4)	
Somewhat	0 (0.0)	2 (10.5)	0 (0.0)	
Very much	4 (100.0)	17 (89.5)	165 (97.6)	
Difficult times strengthen one's faith or spiritual beliefs				0.010*
Not at all	0 (0.0)	1 (5.3)	0 (0.0)	
Somewhat	0 (0.0)	2 (10.5)	4 (2.4)	
Very much	4 (100.0)	16 (84.2)	165 (97.6)	

**Table 2. Univariate Analysis of the Association Between Worry About Dying and Socio-Demographic, Psychological, Family Support, and Faith Characteristics of Advanced Cancer Patients**

Characteristics	Worry About Dying n (%)			p-value
	Not At All	Somewhat	Very Much	
Finds comfort in one's faith or spiritual beliefs				0.308
Not at all	2 (2.5)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.4)	
Somewhat	3 (3.7)	0 (0.0)	2 (4.8)	
Very much	76 (93.8)	69 (100.0)	39 (92.8)	
Finds strength in one's faith or spiritual beliefs				0.013*
Not at all	4 (4.9)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	
Somewhat	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (4.8)	
Very much	77 (95.1)	69 (100.0)	40 (95.2)	
Difficult times strengthen one's faith or spiritual beliefs				0.761
Not at all	1 (1.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	
Somewhat	2 (2.5)	2 (2.9)	2 (4.8)	
Very much	78 (96.3)	67 (97.1)	40 (95.2)	
Knows that things will be okay even during difficult times				0.044*
Not at all	2 (2.5)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	
Somewhat	4 (4.9)	5 (7.2)	8 (19.0)	
Very much	75 (92.6)	64 (92.8)	34 (81.0)	