A report on mutual projects related to breast cancer nursing between Israel and China

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ABSTRACT

Breast cancer is a major concern in women’s health in the western world, and is now receiving more and more attention also in the East. In China, for example, where the incidence of breast cancer was very low, there has been a rapid increase of the disease since the last few years. This report describes how a collaborative nursing project between the Hadassah Medical Organization and the Tianjin Cancer Institute and Hospital was initiated, planned and implemented.

Key words: Breast cancer, collaboration, China, Israel, oncology nursing

In 1998, the International Conference of Nurses in Cancer Care was hosted in Jerusalem. During that conference, a relationship was established between the Israeli group of Breast Care Nurses and a group of Chinese oncology nurses from the Tianjin Cancer Institute and Hospital. A year later, in 1999, the Breast Care Nurse from Hadassah, Dr. Ilana Kadmon, visited China. This opportunity was used to attend the 2nd Biannual Meeting of the Asian Breast Cancer Society and to give a presentation in that meeting about breast cancer in Israel. The conference was held in Tianjin; therefore, it was the best time for “old” friends to meet. Yongqin Jiang, then the Deputy Director of Nursing in that institution, which was the host and the collaborator. A 2-h talk by Dr. Ilana Kadmon to some of the Chinese nurses about developments in breast cancer care was given. Already then, it was decided that collaboration in the future should continue. It was both sides’ dream to be engaged in a longer project in order to enhance mutual exchange of knowledge and ideas between Israeli and Chinese oncology nurses in the area of breast cancer care [Figures 1 and 2].

In July of that year, this dream came true. Prof. Xishan Hao, President of the Tianjin Cancer Institute and Hospital, together with Mrs. Jiang, invited Dr. Ilana Kadmon for a 3-week visit to give a seminar at their hospital. With the support of Hadassah and the Tianjin Cancer Institute and Hospital, this became possible [Figures 3].

This first and most important visit in 2001 included the three following parts:

The first week was a seminar to 60 nurses from the institution on Breast Cancer Care and Psycho-Oncology. The seminar of the first week included 5 days devoted to different areas in breast cancer care. The first day was medical, the second was psychosocial, the third was addressing issues of body image and sexuality, the forth was about the social and political aspect of breast cancer and, on the last day, the development of the role of the Specialist Breast Cancer Nurse was discussed. Many films were shown during the seminar and many interactive sessions, group discussions and exercises were held. The seminar proved to be a great success.

During the second week, mutual work in the breast cancer wards was planned. In this big institution, there are two
departments with forty beds each at the time for women with breast cancer. Nowadays, the number of beds has risen to 337 and there are now four breast cancer departments. Many activities were performed during this part of the project, including discussions with patients, a group meeting with partners, an open lecture to patients and families, discussions with staff about improvement of care and planning for future collaborative research projects.

The third week of the visit was spent mainly outside the institution, visiting other organizations and places in Tianjin. Visits were performed to a large hospital specializing in Chinese Medicine, to the Department of Nursing at the Faculty of Medicine and to a site in the community were activities related to early detection of breast cancer are carried out. Lectures to the Tianjin Nursing Society and Tianjin Rehabilitation Society were also given.

Attitudes to cancer and its treatment vary significantly between these two cultures. Many social issues were discussed and raised during this 3-week mutual work. These included the meaning and significance of the breasts in different social contexts, communicating the diagnosis and prognosis with patients and the need for information and participation in treatment decisions. Probably due to culture and tradition, Chinese women as a whole still lack in some way the possibility of getting actively involved in the planning of their care. Advocacy, empowerment and health consumerism were, and still are, new concepts in this culture. However, the openness of the discussions throughout these seminars and the mutual exchange of thoughts and ideas were an enriching and fulfilling professional experience for both parts.

Future collaboration and exchange of ideas included: A few more visits of the Breast Care Nurse from Hadassah in Jerusalem, Israel, to the Tianjin Cancer Institute and Hospital in Tianjin, China for further lectures and workshops, the establishment of mutual research projects and further developing the concept of breast care nursing in China. This long-term relationship of two great cultures that share a mutual vision in breast care nursing was extremely meaningful for both sides and will continue as long as they can keep this momentum going. It was very interesting to share these projects with no real true common language and with the obvious need for much translation. All parts should thank the husband of Dr. Ilana Kadmon, Dr. Wei-Wei Zheng, who is Chinese and helped with much of the translation.

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