Bridging the gap: The role of national cancer society Malaysia halfway homes in alleviating financial burdens for underprivileged cancer patients undergoing treatment in major Malaysian cities

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This study investigates the role of the National Cancer Society Malaysia (NCSM)'s Homes of Hope in alleviating the financial strain experienced by underprivileged cancer patients undergoing treatment in major Malaysian cities. Cancer treatment often imposes significant financial strain, especially on patients from low-income backgrounds who must travel long distances to access specialized care. NCSM's halfway homes provide free accommodation and essential support services, aiming to reduce indirect costs associated with treatment, such as transportation and temporary accommodation. Specifically, the research focuses on perceived financial relief and perceived change in financial burden among patients and caregivers who utilized these halfway homes. **Materials and Methods:** A quantitative survey was conducted to assess how residence in the Homes of Hope influenced these financial perceptions, particularly in relation to non-medical costs such as transportation and accommodation. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and bivariate inferential analysis, including Chi-square tests of association. **Results:** The results revealed significant relationships between perceived financial relief and multiple factors such as caregiving responsibilities, income level, and employment disruption ($p<0.000$). Similarly, significant associations were found between changes in perceived financial burden and variables like external financial support, household expenses, and frequency of financial aid applications ($p<0.004$). **Conclusion:** Findings indicate that the Homes of Hope significantly contributed to easing financial burdens and enhancing perceived financial relief, particularly among lower-income groups with limited external aid. The study concludes with recommendations to scale up service provision and foster inter-agency collaboration to improve accessibility and impact nationwide.

Keywords: Underprivileged cancer patients, halfway homes, financial burden, national cancer society malaysia, financial relief