

Therapeutic Role of Salah and Qur’anic Recitation: A Study

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Abstract

The paper seeks to investigate the positive effects of salah/ prayer on mental and physical health of human beings suffering from cancer. Cancer, as a life-threatening and emotionally draining disease, affects not only the physical body but also the psychological, emotional, and spiritual well-being of patients. Among patients, two key spiritual practices—Salah (Islamic ritual prayer) and Qur'anic recitation—have emerged as significant sources of psychological support, spiritual resilience, and even physical relief. Drawing from clinical studies, Islamic theology, and qualitative research, the paper highlights the role of spiritual practices in reducing stress, enhancing emotional well-being, and improving overall quality of life.

KEYWORDS: Spirituality, Salah, Cancer, Health

Increasing attention has been given in recent years to holistic approaches in cancer care that consider the spiritual needs of patients. Worship encompasses the body, mind, and soul. Salah, performed five times a day, involves physical movement, mental focus, and spiritual reflection. Similarly, Qur’anic recitation is not only an act of devotion but also a source of psychological comfort and guidance. From a theological standpoint, the Qur’an refers to itself as a healing source, In surah Al-Isra, verse 82 (17th chapter), it is stated that “what we sent from the Qur'an, is healing and mercy for believers” (Moulaei). This verse underlines the perceived curative and consolatory power of the Qur’an, which may hold special relevance for those facing severe illnesses like cancer. Qur’an contains verses that have the power to cure any illness in the world since Qur’an has healing characteristics, “a

study on American Muslims who reported that they believed that God heals indirectly through the actions of healers that use religious sources such as the Quran and supplications from Muhammad” (Qtd. In Suhami et al.).

The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that in 2005, seventy percent of deaths related to cancer occurred in developing countries. By 2015, the number of deaths is expected to rise to 9 million and continuously increase to 11.5 million by 2030.

1. Psychological and Emotional Benefits

• Reduction in Anxiety and Depression

Numerous studies have reported high levels of anxiety and depression among cancer patients. Salah and Qur’anic recitation offer a means of emotional regulation and coping. Salah involves rhythmic movement and repetition that may trigger the relaxation response, similar to mindfulness practices. Qur’anic verses, especially those emphasizing hope, patience, and divine mercy, provide emotional support.

• Enhancement of Spiritual Well-being

Spiritual well-being has been identified as a critical component of quality of life in palliative care. For patients, engaging in Salah and Qur’anic recitation enhances feelings of closeness to God, acceptance of fate, and hope for divine healing. A qualitative study done by Ahmed et al. in 2018 among breast cancer patients in Malaysia found that daily Qur’anic recitation and prayer improved patients’ mood, reduced fear of death, and provided a sense of control. In this context, a research

...by Myto and Knight suggests religion and spirituality contribute to a person’s psychosocial adjustment to cancer, treatments, and quality of life after diagnosis [30], which is important for patients as treatment advances

extend the length of survival [31]. Other research has found patients tend to increase their focus on religion and connection to God as cancer progresses [21], which is also related to various aspects of symptom management. Studies have shown spirituality helps patients have a positive attitude for coping with a diagnosis [32], increased hope for treatment outcomes [33], and higher life satisfaction [34]. Together, these constructs may positively influence women's psychosocial adjustment during the cancer continuum, which may have positive implications on women's ability to adhere to and manage AET. (Toledo et al.)

2. Physiological Benefits

Though not a substitute for medical treatment, spiritual practices can contribute to physical well-being through mechanisms such as:

- **Stress Reduction and Immune Function**

Chronic stress negatively impacts immune function. Salah and Qur'anic recitation may reduce cortisol levels, promoting relaxation and potentially supporting immune health. Brain imaging studies have shown that listening to Qur'anic recitation activates regions associated with emotion regulation and reward, similar to the effects of music therapy. Some preliminary research suggests that slower heart rate and reduced blood pressure occur during recitation or attentive listening.

- **Improved Sleep and Pain Tolerance**

Sleep disturbances and pain are common in cancer patients. Engaging in prayer before sleep or listening to soothing Qur'anic audio has been associated with better sleep quality and higher pain tolerance, possibly due to the calming effect of the recitation's rhythmic and melodic patterns, "Quranotherapy may also be effective to achieve remission in cancer

patients. The Quran, the word of Allah, addresses man's material organs such as brain, lung, liver, and kidney, as well as his spiritual feelings such as soul, mind, heart, and conscience. The Quran is strength and food for hearts and healing for souls” (Hüseyin 65).

3. Social and Existential Support

Salah, especially when performed in congregation (where possible), fosters a sense of solidarity, reducing feelings of isolation. Qur’anic recitation in group settings, such as hospital prayer rooms or family gatherings, can create a shared spiritual space that reinforces bonds and emotional support. For patients struggling with questions of suffering and mortality, the Qur’an provides a framework for understanding trials as tests, and illness as a means of spiritual purification, “Dhikr therapy has a significant effect and a large effect on anxiety reduction in patients... able to affect the body's neurotransmitters, and increase parasympathetic nerve activity and suppress sympathetic nerve activity, [33,34,35] so as to achieve a condition of relaxation and reduce patient anxiety” (Sulistyawati).

4. Clinical Implications and Integration

- **Role of Spiritual Care in Oncology**

Healthcare providers should recognize the importance of spiritual practices in the coping strategies of cancer patients, “Spiritual therapies include multidimensional processes such as recognizing the crisis situation, accepting the situation, experiencing emotions, asking for forgiveness, praying and hoping” (Avci). Chaplaincy services, access to prayer space, and culturally competent care models that integrate spiritual needs are essential. Hospitals should facilitate quiet prayer spaces and allow flexible scheduling for Salah. Audio Qur’an players or mobile apps can be recommended as tools for personal comfort and relaxation, “Listening to

Quran is an effective way that can be used as spiritual therapy” (Al-Jabouri). Oncology teams can refer patients to chaplains or religious counsellors to assist with spiritual care.

Conclusion

Salah and Qur’anic recitation are not only religious duties but also powerful tools of psychological and spiritual resilience, particularly in the context of chronic illness such as cancer. Their benefits extend beyond faith, influencing mental health, emotional balance, and even physiological states. Recognizing and integrating these practices into cancer care can significantly improve the holistic well-being of patients, ensuring a more compassionate and comprehensive approach to healing.

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