ABSTRACT

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Bodily pain from a caring science perspective

CARING SCIENCE

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Many patients experience bodily pain that requires medical treatment. This treatment does not always alleviate their pain and suffering and can thus be experienced as insufficient. Much research has been done on pain and pain treatment from a medical perspective while few studies have been carried out from a caring science perspective.

The aim of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of what bodily pain is and of what is caring for human beings in bodily pain from a caring science perspective. The research questions of the study are as follows: what does bodily pain entail and what is caring for human beings who suffer from bodily pain?

The study takes as its starting-point a caring science perspective. The chosen basic assumptions are that human beings are essentially a unity of body, soul and spirit and that the basic category of caring is suffering. The methodology of the study is hermeneutical and the material has been collected through a focus group. A content analysis has been applied to the material.

The following themes emerged from the results that answer the research question of what bodily pain entails: the different faces of pain, pain is suffering, pain deprives and limits, pain changes personality and creates guilt. The research question of what is caring for human beings who experience bodily pain created the following themes: community is caring, reconciliation alleviates suffering, the caregiver’s bearing eases the burden, and the little extra in everyday life brings vitality.

The findings clearly demonstrate that pain is suffering. Long-term pain without meaning becomes suffering. This study also shows that bodily pain involves suffering on different levels. Bodily pain is an illness suffering, a suffering that is experienced in relation to the actual cause of the pain, the illness and treatment. Negligence and arrogance in care along with not being believed increase suffering and pain. Caring is seeing as well as taking into consideration the human being as a whole. No pain is the same. Taking time to pause in community may make it possible, for the moment, to carry the enormous burden that pain causes human beings and to endure suffering and alleviate pain together.