



The Role of Hope on Transplant Patients' Quality of Life

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Background

- Chronic diseases not only account for rapidly deteriorating health of patients, but are also accompanied by massive emotional, cognitive, and lifestyle changes (Schulz & Kroencke, 2015).
- When such conditions worsen, leading to end-stage organ disease, organ transplant is often seen as the most viable treatment. Organ transplant recipients often witness positive changes in their health and lifestyle post-transplant. However, these positive changes do not always translate to psychological well being (Rainer & Thompson, 2010).
- Research suggests that a significant portion of organ recipients suffer from depression, anxiety, and stress due to a variety of stressors like medical risks, lower quality of life with strict medical regimen, and intrapersonal feelings such as guilt and unforgiveness. Such negative psychological factors further aggravate the health outcomes of transplant patients (Engle, 2001; Schulz & Kroencke, 2015).
- Thus, focusing on positive psychological interventions can possibly help alleviate the psychological challenges faced by organ recipients. In particular, hope has been found to serve as a buffer against negative and stressful life events (Duggal, Sacks-Zimmerman & Liberta, 2016; Látos et al., 2015).

Study Purpose

- This exploratory research project aims to understand the ways in which positive psychological traits are connected to patients' ability to cope with a chronic illness. The current study is guided by the following research question:
 - **Does hope impact transplant recipients' quality of life ?**

Acknowledgments:

- Dr. Nonterah for providing expert guidance
- Participants for taking the time to help us better understand this topic

Methods

- A purposeful sampling of 15 participants recruited from two transplant centers in Southeastern, Virginia
- In this study, qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews over the phone or video conference via Zoom. Participants were asked questions about their experiences and feelings as a transplant recipient.
- An interview guide was followed. The participants filled out consent forms prior to the interview. The study was IRB approved.
- All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions were uploaded into the mixed-method software, MAXQDA, for coding and thematic analyses.

Results

- This study revealed that hope played a key role in the lives of the transplant patients at various stages during their transplant experience. Of the 15 participants interviewed, eight were kidney transplant recipients (53%), four were liver transplant recipients (27%), and three were lung transplant recipients (20%).
- Demographics did not seem to influence the impact that hope had on the patients. The type of organ transplant that the participant received did not affect the role hope played in their experience.
- Most participants reported an increase in hope post-transplant (77.8%), indicating that it played a crucial role as they waited for a transplant (77.8%), and during the recovery process (55.6%).

Conclusion

- Overall, transplant patients in this study relied on hope as a coping technique, especially when they are waiting for transplant or in recovery.
- Our current findings relate to past research examining the impact of hope on the quality of life of patients with multiple sclerosis. Individually, appreciation for beauty, gratitude, hope, and zest all significantly contributed to increased quality of life (Smedema, S. M., & Bhattarai, M., 2020).
- The low number of articles examining the role of hope in transplant recipients' quality of life shows that more research is needed in this area. These findings suggest that hope could play a vital role in buffering against the negative psychological factors that recipients experience post-transplant.
- **Limitation:** There was 100% interrater reliability between two of the coded interviews. However, interrater reliability was not conducted for all of the interviews due to time constraints.
- **Implications:** Further research on the impact of hope should also be done on patients in the pre-transplant stages to better understand how personal increase of hope affects quality of life.

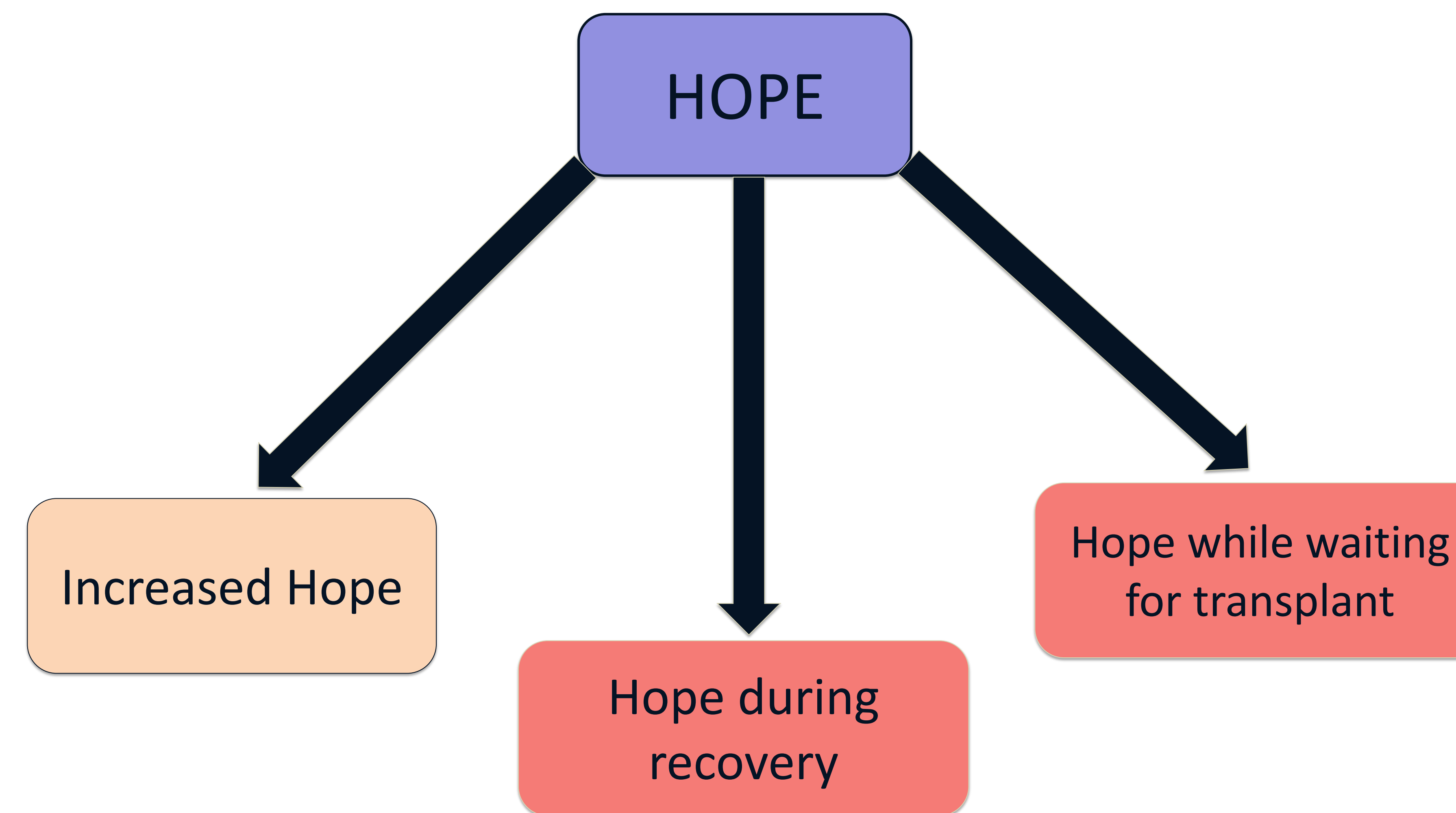


Figure 1: Specific roles played by hope in transplant patients' lives

"It made me a whole lot more hopeful because you know, I know that tomorrow is never promised, so let's live life to the fullest, for today."

Figure 2: Direct quotation from a participant who was a kidney transplant recipient