

DECLARATION

I declare that ***Making meaning in anticipatory mourning: Reflections by caregiving spouses of cancer patients*** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Date

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ABSTRACT

This insider research journey explores the meaning-making processes of female spousal caregivers in anticipatory mourning and the knowledges which they have gained in retrospect. The research traces the social constructions of meaning and how they influence the process of meaning-making. A phenomenological study was undertaken in which unstructured interviews were conducted with five bereaved participants, highlighting the unique way in which each woman made meaning of loss in anticipatory mourning. The main phenomenological themes to emerge from their meaning-making were: a) the significance of time; b) challenges and gifts; c) witnessing the decline; d) paradoxes; e) the significance of the spousal relationship; and f) spirituality. The therapeutic effect of telling the life story is explored in this study and the need for contextual pastoral care that is specific to the state of anticipatory mourning is highlighted. Finally, possibilities for co-constructive pastoral care are raised in the light of the research findings.

Key terms:

Anticipatory mourning; bereavement; caregiving; discourses; meaning-making; participative co-construction; pastoral care; social construction; telling and listening; themes of meaning.

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