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Survivor Guilt Related to Transplant Recipients: A Concept Analysis

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Survivor Guilt Related to Organ Transplant Recipients: A Concept Analysis

A concept analysis of survivor guilt (SG) related to organ transplant recipients was conducted to provide a clear description of this distressing phenomenon. Whether transplant recipients receive a cadaveric or living organ donation, there is inherent harm to the donor whereby the recipient may feel emotional anguish. Despite the hope of a second chance at life, SG can cause mental and/or physical symptoms such as depression, chronic anxiety, and insomnia. SG can lead to negative coping behaviours such as non-adherence to the post transplant regimen, avoidance behaviours or even self-harm, which may result in allograft rejection.

Walker & Avant's eight-step concept analysis method was used to clarify the meaning of SG in relation to organ transplant recipients. The data sources for the electronic literature search included CINAHL, PubMed, and PsycINFO. Dictionary definitions, Google Scholar and related reference lists were also utilized. Four determining attributes of SG are: being saved from harm, the presence of loss or harm for someone else, self-perceived responsibility for the loss or harm, and emotional anguish. Advancing knowledge about the conceptual definition of SG related to transplant recipients empowers nurses, patients, and caregivers to assess and identify SG: the first steps toward better care. By exploring and understanding SG, we can help organ recipients and their families survive SG, thus contributing toward building healthy and safe communities for all.