Death Anxiety Among Chinese Elderly People in Hong Kong

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Objectives: This study aims to examine the cognitive and emotional reactions of Chinese elderly people toward death, to extend the use of a Western scale on death anxiety to a Chinese sample, and to explore the correlates of death anxiety. Methods: A community sample of 237 Chinese elderly people (62 men and 175 women) in Hong Kong between the ages of 60 and 91 years old was individually interviewed. Results: Among this elderly cohort, a high level of death anxiety was associated with younger age, a high level of psychological distress, and the presence of recent stressors but was unrelated to number of physical disorders, gender, personal income, marital and employment status, and religious affiliations. Discussion: Reactions of Chinese elderly people toward specific death-related issues were discussed with regard to Chinese cultural beliefs. Limitations and implications of the present study were also discussed.

Death anxiety is a general term that represents a cluster of death attitudes characterized by negative psychological reactions. There are important theoretical and practical implications to the study of death anxiety among elderly people, which include the refinement of the existing theories of death anxiety and the improvement of the quality of life and health care services of the elderly people (Fortner & Neimeyer, 1999). There is a dearth of studies on death anxiety among Chinese, and none of them are on Chinese elderly people. This study

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