A Metaphor Analysis of Patients’ With Chronic Conditions Experiences With Holistic Nurse Coaching

The purpose of this study was to examine metaphors used by patients with chronic conditions to describe their experience with holistic nurse coaching. A secondary analysis was conducted using Metaphor Identification Procedure to analyze the corpus of 112 pages of typed transcription. Five metaphors emerged: (1) taking personal power back like acquiring a new toolbox; (2) seeing health challenges from different angles like a duck pond race; (3) shifting perception of a chronic condition like a spider turned into a friend; (4) engaging in self-care like caring for a favorite plant; and (5) choosing to focus on the positive like a collage that changed from dark to light. Specific interventions can be developed to address each of these metaphors to help patients live well with chronic conditions. **KEY WORDS:** chronic conditions, holistic nursing, metaphors, nurse coaching, qualitative research, secondary data analysis Holist Nurs Pract 2020;34(1):24–34

Every day, millions of people with chronic conditions struggle to manage their symptoms, implement their self-care plan, and maintain the highest possible quality of life. Chronic conditions or diseases are defined broadly as conditions that last 1 year or more and require ongoing medical attention or limit activities of daily living or both. Six in 10 Americans live with at least 1 chronic disease, such as heart disease, cancer, stroke, or diabetes. About 68.4% of Medicare beneficiaries have 2 or more chronic diseases and 36.4% have 4 or more. These and other chronic diseases are the leading causes of death and disability in America, and they are also a leading driver of health care costs. It is estimated that 90% of the nation’s 3.3 trillion in annual health care expenditures are for people with chronic health conditions.

The traditional medical model of caring for people with chronic diseases—which focuses more on the illness than on the patient—is expensive and often ineffective. Addressing chronic diseases requires new strategies to improve overall health, empower people to become active participants in their health care, and address the problems that people confront in their day-to-day lives.

Chronic conditions have provided fruitful ground for researchers to conduct metaphor analyses. In studies of chronic conditions, metaphor analysis has offered rich and unique perspectives about how patients understand, view, and manage their conditions. These metaphor analyses provided insight into the powerful words and expressions used by patients as they described their chronic illness situations. Examples of frequently researched chronic conditions include cancer, substance abuse and addiction, asthma, anorexia, pain, cardiovascular disease, and depression. Metaphor analyses of chronic conditions highlighted information valuable to clinicians working with selected populations and aimed at improving health. Other studies have used metaphors to explore what meanings patients associate with their experiences with health care providers such as nurse practitioners and intern/resident-patient relationships. No studies,
however, were located that examined the metaphors used by patients with chronic conditions to describe their experiences with holistic nurse coaching.

Holistic nurse coaching for patients with chronic conditions is a relatively new and expanding role for nurses that has abundant potential to dramatically improve patient outcomes. Holistic nurse coaches utilize a whole-person, relationship-centered approach to educate and empower patients such as those with chronic conditions to engage in wellness behaviors, make behavioral changes, and facilitate their ability to cope with health challenges. Research on the influence of holistic nurse coaches is essential to understanding the impact nurses have on patients’ chronic illness experiences.

How may a focus on metaphor contribute to understanding the participants’ experience and its meaning to the participants? Lakoff and Johnson believe that “metaphor is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally: our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices, and spiritual awareness.”

A metaphor is essentially a word picture that says, “Try seeing it like this.” It is intended to help the hearer or reader understand something by describing it as something else. The purpose of this secondary qualitative data analysis was to examine the metaphors used by patients with chronic conditions to describe their experience with holistic nurse coaching.

BACKGROUND

The rising prevalence of chronic conditions represents a tremendous burden for patients and health care systems. Among the most complicated and difficult problems for patients with chronic conditions are impaired quality of life, difficulty learning and engaging in self-management, and repeated hospitalizations and emergency department visits. Therefore, it is essential that patients receive effective patient-centered support, focused on the whole person, to effectively self-manage their individual needs and improve their quality of life. Research findings demonstrate that patient activation (engagement) in self-management improves quality of life and decreases hospital readmission and emergency department use.

Several studies have evaluated the effectiveness of nurse coaching in activating patients with chronic conditions to take charge of their own health by changing behaviors to achieve individual health goals. Professional nurse coaches are strategically positioned to skillfully partner with patients to assess, strategize, plan, and evaluate progress toward negotiated coaching goals. The role of professional nurse coach is currently acknowledged as an expanded role within nursing and was recognized by the American Nurses Association with national board certification in 2013. In addition, evidence demonstrates that supporting patients in their home settings as self-managers is an essential element of high-quality care. Delaney and Bark conducted a phenomenological study in which they explored the lived experience of patients with chronic conditions receiving holistic nurse coaching. That primary study set the stage for a secondary analysis of the data set used in this metaphor analysis.

Nurse coaching empowers patients to identify self-care goals and activate lasting wellness behaviors toward reaching their goals. The International Coach Federation (ICF) first developed the original coaching core competencies in 1996. The competencies provide a greater understanding of the skills and approaches used within the coaching profession. Metaphors are included as an important part of the direct communication core competency.

They are powerful and effective for illustrating a point or painting a verbal picture. The development of the Nurse Coach core competencies in 2012 relied on the success and wisdom of the ICF core competencies and included metaphor as a valuable communication skill as well. Patients with chronic conditions use metaphor to express their experiences of being coached in rich, succinct, and meaningful ways.

Apart from a required coaching competency, metaphors allow both the patient and the coach to explore different ways of knowing. The ability to access pictures and images from the right brain brings creativity to coaching; when joined with the analytical thinking of the left brain, the process becomes interesting and alive. When different ways of knowing are incorporated into coaching, no 2 sessions are alike, and the process offers an interactive, deep exploration into a journey of health and well-being. The coach and the patient are always looking to answer the question, “What is really going on here?” as the patient works toward creating his or her best life. Using metaphor allows for a new and plentiful language to emerge from the conversation, adding depth and nuance to the exploration.
METAPHOR

A metaphor is essentially a word that describes a complicated concept that is difficult to grasp by connecting something that is unfamiliar to something that is familiar. Metaphors help patients express what they cannot completely capture using only medical jargon or everyday language. Sharoff describes the intricacies of metaphors as “linguistic tapestry, woven and threaded together by one’s lived experience.”

The seminal work by Lakoff and Johnson was derived by cognitive linguistics. Through the cognitive linguistic view, providers and patients are able to see things from different perspectives. Collectively, metaphors provide a more complete picture of what an individual is attempting to explain and are particularly valuable in facilitating health care communication between patients and providers. An examination of how metaphors shape the experiences of patients with chronic conditions who work with a holistic nurse coach can provide insightful information to coaches who undertake the challenge of empowering patients toward self-care and healing.

The foundational work on metaphor analysis by Lakoff and Johnson identified and defined several types of metaphors such as structural, ontological, and orientational. According to Lakoff and Johnson, structural metaphors are cases where “one highly structured and clearly delineated concept [is used] to structure another.” A “heavy weight” was used as a structural metaphor in Beck’s metaphor analysis of mothers’ stories of caring for a child with an obstetric brachial plexus injury. Ontological metaphors allow individuals to categorize, group, and quantify experiences or attributes that permit individuals to reason and understand. Ontological metaphors can be further subdivided into personification and container. Personification metaphors are those that attribute “human qualities to things that are non-human.” “The devil in the corner” was a personification metaphor in the Hearn et al study that portrayed the intense experience of pain from spinal injury. A container metaphor is defined as something that has inside and outside boundaries and may be viewed from multiple perspectives. “A veil” was used as a container metaphor describing the obstruction of clear vision that illustrated the emotional devastation suffered during the depths of addiction. The perspective changed toward recovery as the “veil was lifted.”

“Orientational metaphors organize a whole system of concepts with respect to one another” that involves spatial orientation such as the ups-downs, highs-lows, ins-outs, and emotions experienced with many changes. A “roller coaster” was used by Fixsen and Ridge as an orientational metaphor to describe the ups and downs of withdrawal.

STUDY DESIGN AND METHODS

Secondary qualitative data analysis

A secondary data analysis involves the use of an existing data set collected for one study to answer new questions in another investigation. Typically, secondary data analysis is used in quantitative designs. However, researchers are realizing that a secondary data analysis of qualitative data can expand the use of the initial data collected to provide meaningful and rich information to inform practice. The study here involved the use of a primary data set collected from the same participants for the primary phenomenological study.

Analytical expansion was the type of secondary qualitative analysis used in this study. Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP), created by the Pragglejaz Group, was the method applied to examine the metaphors used by patients with chronic conditions to describe their experiences with holistic nurse coaching. The seminal work of the Pragglejaz Group increased the rigor of the MIP and has been used and refined by others over time to increase the flexibility and validity of the analysis.

Primary study

The primary study was a descriptive phenomenological study of 15 patients’ (11 females and 4 males) with chronic conditions experiences with holistic nurse coaching. The primary research question was as follows: What is the lived experience of patients with chronic conditions receiving holistic nurse coaching? After receiving approval from the university institutional review board, participants were interviewed on a secure phone line. Participants were recruited through the Wisdom of the Whole Coaching Academy. Five nationally board-certified holistic nurse coaches who are alumni of the Wisdom of the Whole Academy and have an established independent coaching practice identified potential participants.
These holistic nurse coaches had received 60 hours of coaching training and use a holistic integral model of coaching that incorporates a multidimensional approach to whole-person coaching, a variety of tools to help patients access multiple ways of knowing that includes body, mind, spirit, and energy, and principles of motivational interviewing. The participants’ ages ranged from 28 to 78 years, with a mean age of 48.9 years. The majority of participants were female (73.3%), white (93.3%), married (53.3%), and held a bachelor’s (46.7%) or master’s degree (46.7%). Patients reported 12 different chronic conditions that included multiple sclerosis, cancer, pain, depression, and substance use. The sample included both short-term and long-term coaching clients for duration that ranged from 4 months to 8 years.

Participants were asked to describe their experiences with holistic nurse coaching in as much detail as possible. After using Colaizzi’s method for phenomenological analysis, 8 themes emerged. Data saturation was achieved at 11 patients and was confirmed after completing 4 more interviews with patients for a total sample size of 15. In addition, 13 of the 15 patients reviewed the results and agreed the findings captured their experiences. The 8 themes were as follows: (1) seeking guidance to navigate life’s challenges; (2) entering a safe sacred place; (3) feeling empowered and accountable; (4) developing strategies to access different ways of knowing; (5) finding the answers within; (6) making healthy behavioral changes; (7) forming a new caring relationship with self; and (8) transforming to a brand-new approach to life.

Data analysis

In this metaphorical analysis, the collection of 112 pages of typed transcription of the interviews with the 15 patients describing their experiences with holistic nurse coaching formed the corpus of this study. The Pragglejaz Group’s MIP was the method used to identify the metaphors in the corpus. MIP includes the following 4 steps:

1. Read the entire text-discourse to establish a general understanding of the meaning.
2. Determine the lexical units in the text-discourse. (A lexical unit is a single word or short phrase.)
3. (a) For each lexical unit in the text, establish its meaning in the context, that is, how it applies to an entity, relation, or attribute in the situation evoked by the text (contextual meaning). (b) For each lexical unit, determine whether it has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the one in the given context. (c) If the lexical unit has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the given context, decide whether the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with it.
4. If yes, mark the lexical unit as metaphorical.

After all the lexical units were identified, they were categorized into the metaphors most often used by patients to describe their experiences with holistic nurse coaching. Frequency counts for each of these metaphors were tabulated to identify the order of their frequency.

Analytic Rigor

Rigor is essential in enhancing confidence in the findings from a qualitative analysis. To further increase the quality and rigor of the data collection, data interpretation of the material was taken into account. Two concerns of secondary qualitative data analysis are “not having been there” and “data fit.” A researcher’s “immersion in and closeness to the data” are important in capturing participants’ perceptions. Therefore, “not having been there” is a major concern when a researcher who conducts a secondary qualitative analysis was not involved in the primary data collection, thus is detached from the original data. “Not having been there” was not an issue in this study because the investigator who analyzed the raw data from the primary and secondary studies remained the same. The researcher had knowledge of the data set and intimate details. The consistency of the same investigator reanalyzing the data in a different way increased confidence in the findings.

The issue of “data fit” involves the use of data originally collected for another primary purpose. The study here addressed the 3 issues of potential concern related to “data fit”: (1) the entire raw data set was used, no data were missing; (2) there was a degree of convergence in the primary and secondary study aims in that the researcher felt the data set to be sufficient for the secondary investigation; and (3) the method used to obtain the data for the secondary analysis would have been the same if the secondary analysis was the primary study.
RESULTS

Five different metaphors emerged from patients’ descriptions of their experiences with holistic nurse coaching (Table). Of the sample of 15 patients with chronic conditions, 13 used metaphors to articulate their experiences and the number of metaphors used by these patients ranged from 1 to 4. For each metaphor, an exemplar of a patient’s quote that identified the type of metaphor is presented. This is followed by other patients’ quotes that reflect the same essence of the metaphor. Frequencies for each metaphor are presented. The metaphor with the highest frequency count was metaphor 1 “Acquiring a new toolbox” and the lowest was for metaphor 4 “Spider turned into a friend.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metaphor Number</th>
<th>Metaphor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Taking personal power back like acquiring a new toolbox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Seeing health challenges from different angles like a duck pond race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Shifting perception of a chronic condition like a spider turned into a friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Engaging in self-care like caring for a favorite plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Choosing to focus on the positive like a collage that changed from dark to light</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Holistic Nurse Coaching facilitates taking personal power back like acquiring a new toolbox

I often felt overwhelmed and powerless with the pain in my back. I’ve seen so many doctors too, so you just sort of, you feel kind of beaten down and you feel like you’re not always being listened to. It was totally different with my coach. She really listened to me and I felt cared for. It allowed me to be myself and talk about what is really bothering me at any given time. Being listened to and guided in my health goals was empowering and I was able to take some of my power back. She was a very stabilizing presence and helping me to see that there’s ways through this space. I guess she helped me find the tools to cut a path through the forest on my own with her guidance. I guess, a good way to put it is that she didn’t cut the path, she gave me the axe and helped me.

In this secondary qualitative data analysis of patients’ descriptions of their experiences with holistic nurse coaching, the structural metaphor of a toolbox frequently appeared. The vast majority of the patients (13 of 15) discussed the tools they gained through coaching. Patients shared how their chronic condition and dealing with the health care system took away their sense of personal power. Holistic nurse coaches helped patients regain their personal power by working with them to develop their own set of tools to assist in managing and coping with their specific chronic conditions.

Other examples of patient’s use of this metaphor are as follows:

- My coaching sessions brought clarity, the toolbox is there.
- In dealing with my condition, what I really needed was just more insight and more tools and so on to deal with it in the context of what I wanted to do.
- My coach helped me come up with a game plan to manage my health and my life. I have the tools I need.
- Coaching provides a whole self-awareness and self-clarity that I wouldn’t have had prior to this. I did not have the tools before and now that she helped me put together those tools, I have found out so much more about myself and about what can help heal you and all that stuff so, I definitely feel more empowered.
- My coach gave me the tools and then I was able to kind of run with it after that.
- One patient described the use of imagery as a powerful tool to manage her stress:
  - Imagery has been the most important tool I received from coaching. My coach helped me to trust that there’s a presence that wants only good for me, that wants my healing, that there is a safe place to go to in times of distress. I can imagine that inner healer embracing me or creating a place for me to lay down and be cared for and that just the practice of imagining that has brought me kind of into a healthier state of mind when I’m vulnerable to, like I said, kind of spinning out into fear, anxiety about my health. So it’s, I guess, strengthened a sense of maybe how I, how I can respond to health issues that are sometimes not in my control, but that with my inner healer, I can still feel safe and grounded and move through challenging times with a greater sense of serenity rather than, you know, causing more suffering.

Holistic nurse coaching facilitates seeing health challenges from different angles like a duck pond race

I used to play this game, when I was a child there was the fairs would come through town and there would be like this game where you would pick a rubber duck in floating water and the duck would have either an S for small, M for medium, L for large and that’d be the prize you would get. You know a big stuffed animal or whatever, and sometimes I would look down at the bottom of the water and you could see the letter reflected back at you, but you’d only see it at a certain angle with a certain light and so it kind of was, just by changing my attitude a little bit and my angle I could see the value in something that I didn’t see before. I realize that is what coaching did for me. I can look at things from different angles to get all the information.

For this container metaphor, patients repeatedly (10 of 15) shared their ability to look at things from multiple perspectives or different angles. Using multiple perspectives to assess their health, and the challenges that occurred with the guidance of their coach, facilitated patients’ ability to find answers they were not able to see before.

The following quotes illustrate the patients’ adoption of this metaphor:

- My coach’s method includes all these different aspects of mind body. I was always in the thought realm or what should I do, what’s the rational thing to do and so on. One of the developments during the whole coaching process was my self-looking from all different perspectives. Once I listened to how I felt, my mind was led to a train of thought or insights that would get me back on track or lead me to discovering something new.

- My coach gave attention to all the different angles that we could work on with any issue I brought to the table.
My coach took into account the whole body, mind and spirit and that’s what she has introduced me to. She gave me another perspective to look at life and things and that was invaluable.

It changed perspective for me for everything.

Perspective is important because when you’re in a situation where you have a disease, there’s so many ways to look at things and you know your personality brings something to the table and you may only be able to see one side of the equation, but having a coach allows you, allows you to see other perspectives and other possibilities, she’s introduced me to other ways of thinking.

**Holistic nurse coaching facilitates shifting perception of a chronic condition like a spider turned into a friend**

As I slogged my way from one promised cure to the next, I realized I was also in the throes of crippling depression. I was mourning the life I had lost, and all that I took for granted prior to the pain. Realizing that the pain had clearly become a mind/body issue, I reached out to a nurse coach. When asked to describe how I felt about my pain, a spider appeared in my mind. I am scared to death of spiders just like I am afraid of the pain. My coach guided me to see my chronic pain and spiders in a new way. I started by making friends with the spider. I realized there was something inside patiently waiting for me to all this time. Her name is Allie, a caring, maternal presence that manifested as a spider Allie nurtured both mind and body—she wove a cool, absorbing web/cocoon around the red hot knots in my back, instantly diminishing the agony. She also offered me sage advice, often with hidden significance. When I blamed myself for the pain, Allie gave me permission to forgive myself. When I felt incarcerated by the pain, Allie helped me to realize I was both the inmate and the warden—and all along, I held the keys. And when the pain felt punitive, Allie offered me new ways to “package” the pain—even seeing the secret gifts behind it. It has changed the way I see my pain as well as spiders I see outside. I am not afraid of them anymore.

In this personification metaphor, chronic condition was given a human quality by some patients as they referred to their chronic condition as an enemy turned into a friend (7 of 15). Many participants expressed their anger, frustration, and worry about their chronic condition as seen in the following quotes:

I felt like my body betrayed me.

I had a lot of anger with my body. The anger alone might have you know caused me to be a lot sicker if I hadn’t done something about it.

I spent a lot of time worrying about my attention-deficit disorder. How would it affect my job?

Holistic nurse coaches helped patients in shifting their perception of their chronic condition. A patient stated: “My coach helped me in shifting the relationship from one of anger to feeling compassion.” Another added: “Coaching helped me make friends with myself.”

**Holistic nurse coaching facilitates engaging in self-care like caring for a favorite plant**

My banana plant has been through a lot with me, it has been with me throughout my recovery. I brought it to the sober house in a Tupperware container. When I moved out of the sober house and to a new apartment, the plant came with me. Over the past few years, it would grow and it would struggle. When I took care of it, gave it water, and new soil and a bigger pot when needed it, it would flourish. Other times, I would not pay as much attention to it and it would look sick. Once I got the hang of caring for it, I knew what it needed to grow. It is the same for me. Coaching helped me to prioritize caring for myself, doing what I needed to do to stay healthy. I care for myself like I care for my plant. That plant is special to me, I care a lot about it. It is bigger and healthier than it has ever been and I have been sober for 3 years and now have a new position helping others stay sober. Most patients (12 of 15) described a new quality of self-care as a result of coaching in this personification metaphor. This new engagement in self-care of their chronic condition was often compared with caring for nature or a cherished possession. One patient described caring for her lungs as birds:

I have some lung issues that kind of came on very suddenly. I’ve got bronchiectasis and chronic Staph infection in my lungs now, which makes it hard for me to you know breathe or I get winded very easily and I constantly have to take care of my lungs and initially I was very sort of angry and felt betrayed by my lungs and we did some coaching, and my lungs appeared to me as like a couple of like birds that were just needed to be held and healed and that they, I shouldn’t be angry at them, but I needed to help heal them and that they were kind of like these things in my care as opposed to just me getting mad at my body. Like a pet almost. Like finding a couple birds on the floor you know that fell out of the nest or something and it helped me to recalibrate my attitude toward my own body.

Other patients gave a human quality to their engagement in self-care as caring for another person:
I think overall it ends up being more respectful and kinder to myself in a way. It’s like I find myself treating myself more like I treat somebody else I really cared about and I think a lot of that has come from being in touch with, more in touch with the various inner aspects of myself. This gives me more insight into myself as a person, who I am as a person and I sort of relate to myself more that way.

Other comments are as follows:

My coach helped me to care for my whole self, body, mind, and spirit. I would never get that information at the doctors.

I care for myself in a deeper way now.

**Holistic nurse coaching facilitates choosing to focus on the positive like a collage that changed from dark to light**

My husband and I have been experiencing extreme medical issues over a prolonged period of time. We were in the middle of a major storm in a very dark place. I was a shadow of the energy I was born into this world with and now I had to protect my husband from a life that was completely unacceptable for both of us. Coaching was a true partnership of engagement where I, as the client, lead the scope and the depth of each journey of exploration that I feel the interest or drive to explore. This journey is always multilayered as the mind, body and soul. With the guidance of my coach, I made a critical choice to transform my perspective, to focus on what was important to me and put the “I” back in my life. What do I want to be happy? What small step can I take today to improve my health. The coaching was so multi-dimensional that it has equipped me with the tools to explore myself. I have chosen to surround this life’s experience within this newly considered inner context that expands the world in which I live. I have chosen to focus on the positive, celebrate each small step we take, and envision a future filled with light and peace as long as I keep doing the work. We are still in the storm but I am comforted by the knowledge that we will not get lost again.

Many participants described the experience of holistic nursing coaching as resulting in a transformation in the way they viewed their life. The container metaphor of moving from darkness to light by choosing to focus on the positive provided yet another aspect of holistic nurse coaching as experienced by patients with chronic conditions (11 of 15). These quotes that follow reflect this transformation:

Coaching has given me a new perspective on life. I am choosing to be grateful and have gratitude and bring this side into my life rather than always being on the negative and I don’t like this and she did that and blah, blah, blah, because that doesn’t achieve anything.

Coaching helped me to look at things in a more positive way. My coach knows how to bring these things forward when I am negative and get you to look at how you were, how you were thinking and bring you into a different realm.

As a result of coaching I don’t worry so much about the so-called negatives of attention-deficit disorder anymore. I look at it more as okay this is how I function. How am I going to accentuate the positives, take advantage of those? I decided on not being unhappy with my condition, but actually just seeing it as a fun challenge.

One patient compared the insight she gained into herself and her life as a result of coaching to exiting Plato’s cave in the Republic;

I was at the bottom of a cave or a tunnel and what I was seeing on the wall was just an illusionary shadow or an allusive shadow that basically is just being reflected off a small fire in total darkness, versus the reality of being actually in the sun. Coaching helped me take an honest look at the conditions in my life so I could address them and make new healthy choices for myself.

**DISCUSSION**

This study examined the metaphors used by patients with chronic conditions to describe their experiences with holistic nurse coaching. “Metaphors are like a series of brush-strokes so that no single metaphor adequately expresses the state.”58(p215) Different metaphors can structure different aspects of a concept. Five different metaphors helped structure patients’ with chronic conditions experiences with holistic nurse coaching. Findings from the study suggest that holistic nurse coaches were effective in assisting patients in 5 fundamental areas: (1) assisting with developing a toolbox of strategies to help increase empowerment; (2) viewing health challenges from multiple perspectives to gain a more complete understanding of the chronic condition; (3) helping with developing a healthier relationship with their chronic condition; (4) becoming more conscious, aware of, and engaged in self-care behaviors; and (5) choosing to focus on the positive, able to see their chronic condition in a new light, as an integral aspect of transforming toward hope and healing.

Findings from this study validate and expand on previous research. Several studies identify coping strategies used by patients with chronic conditions.
such as cancer, substance abuse and addiction, depression, and pain.\textsuperscript{9,14,59,60} The 5 metaphors identified in this research expand the tool kit and consequently the different perspectives patients described in comparison with previous studies.\textsuperscript{37,61} Patients described numerous tools and strategies used to increase empowerment over their chronic condition. These patients were also able to view the chronic condition from different angles and multiple perspectives. These views provided opportunities to better understand these different perspectives and incorporate additional strategies as needed to sustain improved management of their chronic condition.

Patient activation of various self-management strategies evident here, may be, in part, due to working with holistic nurse coach graduates from the \textit{Wisdom of the Whole Coaching} program. The program curriculum is based on a holistic framework and aimed at assisting patients to integrate body, mind, spirit, and energy knowing. Coaches receive training to use more than 20 strategies that relate to different structures of consciousness that may be used by patients as needed to access multiple ways of knowing.\textsuperscript{37}

Although many studies found that patients looked at their chronic illness as an enemy,\textsuperscript{8,14,15} no studies were found that reported their perceptions changed. Changes in perceptions became a new way of knowing for patients with chronic conditions that opened possibilities to establish a healthier relationship with the chronic condition, allowing the patient to move forward. The holistic nurse coach helped patients perceive the chronic illness as less threatening and able to view their chronic condition in a more positive way. This new positive view opened up possibilities for engagement in healthy mind-body-spirit-energy behaviors. These findings have important implications for holistic nurse coach–patient communication.

**Limitations**

There are a few limitations of this study indicating the need for further research. Patients in this study received coaching from nurses who all graduated from one program and shared the same coaching approach. Each story of a patient’s experience with the coach was uniquely personal, thus can only represent a portion of patients’ stories and experiences and cannot be generalized to experiences of other patients working with other coaches. The focus of this study was on the metaphorical interpretations of patients’ experiences with holistic nurse coaches; therefore, conclusions offered from this qualitative and interpretive methodology must be viewed tentatively. Larger studies of patients’ accounts are needed to provide additional insight. Interpretations can differ; however, they clearly provide a basis for understanding the world view of this select group of patients with chronic disease working with a holistic nurse coach.

The strength of this study is that this research is the first to examine holistic nurse coaching through metaphors used by patients to describe their experience with a holistic nurse coach. The findings add to the body of scientific evidence on the effectiveness of a holistic nurse coach. According to the participants in this study, the holistic nurse coach provided valuable guidance that facilitated patient action to use their energy resources.

**Implications**

The 5 metaphors patients used to describe their experience with holistic nurse coaching provide valuable insight and implications for coaches. This newly gained insight into patients’ experiences is of added value to the further development of the holistic nurse coach profession and education. Specific interventions can be developed by nurse coaches to address each of the 5 metaphors identified in this study to help patients live well with chronic conditions.

(1) Offer a variety of tools when requested to assist patients in developing an individualized toolbox for managing, coping, and even reversing a chronic condition.

(2) Access all a patient’s potential by using multiple skills and various parts of “self” (body, mind, spirit, energy, and environment).

(3) Invite a conversation about how patients feel about their conditions, allowing visualization and even dialogue with the chronic condition’s form and needs.

(4) Ask: “What is the gap between how patients care for self and a cherished person/object?”

(5) Reinforce the way patients perceive their chronic conditions and how they can use choice to improve their health and well-being.

**CONCLUSIONS**

“Metaphors have the ability to promote awareness, insight, and a deeper comprehension of self, others, spirituality, emotions, and transformation and can
enhance awareness of new ways of being and behaving.”62(p17) Metaphors in this study helped the patient, the coach, and the reader understand a deeper experiential learning of the coaching process than what would have occurred in a left brain analytical description. The metaphors illustrated progression from a life of darkness to one of more light, the gap between how patients used self-care as compared with how patients cared about a cherished person or object, the way patients perceived their chronic conditions, and how they used choice to improve their health and well-being.

This study utilizes a valid research method for the analysis of metaphors in the lived experiences of holistic nurse coaching for patients with chronic conditions. It invites other researchers to consider new perspectives and utilize new paradigms for studies. It can broaden the “how” research is carried out. Using qualitative secondary data analysis to mine for metaphors from a primary data set is a creative opportunity for researchers to discover new knowledge and add new ways of knowing that expands and enriches the research field in nurse coaching. When metaphor is introduced into a coaching session, it has the potential to address a more complex picture of issues since it allows for more nuance and illuminates a whole-person approach that can yield powerful new awareness for patients. Taking action steps based on this new awareness allows for successful lasting change because a deeper level of consciousness has been explored. Patients are confident in their choices and empowered to live well with chronic conditions. This study provides a foundation for future research that examines the use of metaphors in a variety of coaching situations and evaluates the effects of interventions that arise from metaphors to advance nurse coaching and improve patient outcomes.

REFERENCES


