**Title:** Compassionate companionship: Experiences of families caring for cancer patients through the palliative and end-of-life period, Lampang, Thailand

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**Significance:** Care of cancer patients through the palliative and end-of-life period can be physically, financially and emotionally challenging for family caregivers. In times of increasing modern and traditional interactions, health professionals who wish to provide culturally and technically appropriate support to the families need to understand how these families confronted and executed the care during this phase of life.

**Aim:** We aimed to describe family caregivers’ experiences of caring for cancer patients through the palliative and end-of-life period.

**Design:** Adescriptive qualitative research design was used.

**Participants & Methods:** Eight family caregivers (five women) who cared for a dying cancer patient in Lampang participated in an unstructured in-depth interview. We performed a constant comparative analysis of the data.

**Results:** There were three themes emerged from the data analysis: Dying is painful and often unknown, Compassionate companionship, and Supplemental support and resources. The participants described the dying of the patients as a painful and, often, not-fully known journey to the patient. For different reasons, these family members had become caregivers for the dying. Through the course of caring, they had gradually developed compassionate companionship with the patient under their care. Companionship was not a one-off event, rather it was a constant physical and mental actions that caregivers did to meet patients’ needs—during the dying, at death and after death. The distressing nature of cancer and treatment-related illnesses therefore took toll on the caregivers’ physical and mental health. The caregivers highlighted the importance of having enough resources and support to supplement the care to maintain care and wellbeing of both the patients and themselves.

**Conclusion & Recommendation:** Compassionate companionship is a concept derived from experiences of family caregivers of cancer patients. It denotes the intensity of the caregiving provided to palliative and end-of-life patients.

**Keywords:** Companionship, End of life, Cancer, Qualitative research

**Other requirements**

1. Word limit: Not more than 400 words
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