Explanatory Models of Cancer among Sri Lankans:
An Interim Analysis

TH Solomons[1#], S Malaviarachchi[1], J Balawardane[1] and S Manjuka[2]

[1]Faculty of Medicine, General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University
[2] University Hospital, General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University

[#]thsolomons@kdu.ac.lk

Current research shows that health-related beliefs are important in predicting adherence to treatment, the psychological impact of the condition, and the subsequent quality of life. The personal etiological framework of an individual regarding his/ her health condition is referred to as an explanatory model. Explanatory models have been researched in relation to many diseases. The current research literature shows that in Asian countries, individuals have two parallel sets of explanatory models. One is based on the western medical models, while the other is based on cultural and religious beliefs. Thus, it is very important to understand both belief-systems in providing health care. This appears to be even more important in chronic conditions such as cancer, where treatment toxicity and treatment tolerance may have a continued impact on quality of life. The current study explores the explanatory models related to cancer in a convenient sample of 140 adults in Sri Lanka. The study was conducted as an online survey. The study indicates that the biological explanatory models for cancer are strongly believed. The most strongly believed religious-cultural reason for cancer is *"Karma".* Most participants believed they would choose both Western medical treatments and religious and culture-specific treatments if they or their family members received a cancer diagnosis. The majority believed Western medical treatment to be the most important treatment modality. Thus, it will be important for clinicians to acknowledge the patient's desire to incorporate alternative treatment methods and non-medical explanatory models in providing cancer treatment.

Keywords: *explanatory models, cancer, Karma*