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Summary

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) comprises Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis and indeterminate colitis. There are approximately 300.000 people in Germany, who got diagnosed with this chronic relapsing–remitting inflammatory condition of the intestines. Most of the people with IBD experience diarrhea and stomach pain. Those symptoms often lead to restrictions in different areas of the day to day life.

One of the big challenges in coping with a chronic condition – and especially with IBD – is uncertainty, a feeling defined as “the inability to determine the meaning of illness-related events”.

The goal of this dissertation was to better understand the experiences with and impact of uncertainty on the day to day life of patients with IBD. 20 narrative Interviews were analyzed, to determine which factors influence uncertainty, which areas of the daily life are most affected and what strategies people are using to try to continue a normal course of their life despite all the struggles. The main research question was: ‘What role does the concept of uncertainty play for people with IBD?’

The interviews for this study were gathered for a German website ‘krankheitserfahrungen.de’. The project behind this web page aims to collect, edit and present a wide range of experiences of people with different health issues.

Grounded Theory was used to analyze the interviews. This methodology consists of analyzing, coding (open, axial and selective) und interpreting text passages. Statements of the participants were analyzed and categories were developed. By putting the categories in connection to each other, a model (coding paradigm) with “uncertainty” as the main category was developed in the end of the analysis.

With the help of qualitative research methods, we were able to better understand the inner life of our participants and make their experiences more comprehensible, in contrast to a more abstract representation in the previous literature.

Uncertainty plays an important role in the life of people with IBD. It can be found in almost all important areas of life, where it has an enormous impact on the day routine. These realizations led us to the understanding of uncertainty as a multidimensional construct that makes the day to day life of people with IBD irregular and impossible.