A B S T R A C T
Cancer creates a difficult situation connected with an extreme psychological burden for the patient, with the main symptom being the high level of stress resulting from the necessity to change the hierarchy of values and life goals, the prospect of physical pain and dependence on others.

The main goal of the research was to determine the scope of social support recognized by patients with cancer. Determination of the phases of disease predominantly burdened with stress as well as methods of stress reduction was the indirect goal of the research.

The research was conducted in the Wielkopolska province in 2008, and included a target group of patients with head or neck cancer treated by an oncological clinic. The researchers used a diagnostic poll as the method, and a questionnaire as the instrument.

The results showed that patients expect and are granted support of two basic types: emotional: allowing them to conquer their own internal tension and negative feelings, to express their fear, anxiety and sorrow, and to give rise to hope; and practical: aiming at the exchange and provision of information and advice that bring about better understanding of their condition, life situation and problems. The latter type of support results in the collection of feedback on the effectiveness of countermeasures taken by the supported patients, and exchange of information about certain procedures and the form of modelling efficient countermeasures.

Keywords: Social support, Cancer, Stress