

The Role Support Groups Play in Decreasing Depression and PTSD in Cancer Survivors: A Literature Review

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Abstract : Due to advances in technology and early detection and treatment of cancer, many cancer patients are surviving longer than five years post-diagnosis. Most cancer patients suffer from depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at some point during diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship. A subgroup of patients will continue to suffer from depression and PTSD and require early intervention. Support groups provide patients with the emotional and informational support they require while also giving survivors a sense of community, friendship, and purpose. This type of support is recognized by researchers to improve the quality of life while also decreasing depression and PTSD symptoms. The gaps in the literature include cultural diversity, minorities, and support groups involving cancer types other than breast cancer. Another gap in the literature includes the perceptions of cancer patients as well as longitudinal studies to determine the relationships between support groups and decreased depression and PTSD rates over time. Future research is required to fill the gaps in the literature mentioned previously. Future research is also needed to analyze the difference in age groups and different types of support groups such as professionally-led, peer-led, and online. Implications for practice involve providers assessing for the symptoms of depression and PTSD in order to offer prompt treatment and support services to those patients. In conclusion, social support by way of support groups improves the quality of life, gives survivors a sense of purpose to help others while also gaining the support they need, and reduces the rate of depressive episodes related to PTSD.

Keywords : cancer survivor, survivorship, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, support groups

Conference Title : ICHO 2023 : International Conference on Hematology and Oncology

Conference Location : Rome, Italy

Conference Dates : August 24-25, 2023