

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Combined Psychiatric and Psychotherapeutic Care versus Psychotherapy Alone in the Treatment of Depression and Anxiety in Cancer Patients

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Abstract : Background and Purpose: Presently, there is a paucity of naturalistic studies that directly compare the effectiveness of psychotherapy versus concurrent psychotherapy and psychiatric care for the treatment of depression and anxiety in cancer patients. Informed by previous clinical trials examining the efficacy of concurrent approaches, this study sought to test the hypothesis that a combined approach would result in the greatest reduction of depression and anxiety symptoms. Methods: Data for this study consisted of 433 adult cancer patients, with 252 receiving only psychotherapy and 181 receiving concurrent psychotherapy and psychiatric care at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. Longitudinal PHQ9 and GAD7 data were analyzed between both groups using latent growth curve analyses. Results: After controlling for treatment length and provider effects, results indicated that concurrent care was more effective than psychotherapy alone for depressive symptoms ($\gamma_{12} = -0.12$, $p = .037$). Specifically, the simple slope for concurrent care was -0.25 ($p = .022$), and the simple slope for psychotherapy alone was -0.13 ($p = .006$), suggesting that patients receiving concurrent care experienced a greater reduction in depressive symptoms compared to patients receiving psychotherapy alone. In contrast, there were no significant differences between psychotherapy alone and concurrent psychotherapy and psychiatric care in the reduction of anxious symptoms. Conclusions: Overall, as both psychotherapy and psychiatric care may address unique aspects of mental health conditions, in addition to potentially providing synergetic support to each other, a combinatorial approach to mental healthcare for cancer patients may improve outcomes.

Keywords : psychiatry, psychology, psycho-oncology, combined care, psychotherapy, behavioral psychology

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