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Development and Evaluation of the Multimedia Intervention Program
“Touch, Caring and Cancer: Simple Instruction for Family and Friends”

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Abstract

Purpose. The purpose of this two-phase NCI-sponsored project is to develop and evaluate an instructional multimedia program for the intimate partners and family members of cancer patients in the safe and effective use of touch and massage techniques as supportive care at home. Phase I tested feasibility of brief instruction in a live workshop format with 50 dyads and found significant impact on frequency and duration of use of massage in caregiving at 3-month follow-up. Caregivers’ perceived self-efficacy in giving massage and patients’ ratings of its helpfulness more than doubled. Caregiver burden, relationship quality, frequency and duration of practice predicted individual responses (JSIO, 5(4);2007:147-54). The purpose of Phase II is to develop a multimedia program to deliver the instruction, conduct usability testing of the materials, and evaluate acute and longitudinal effects of utilization on well-being in a multi-ethnic sample of 100 patient/caregiver dyads. The focus of this presentation will be on the development of the multimedia intervention and results of the usability testing. An overview of the randomized controlled trial (RCT) in progress will also be provided.

Method. A multi-ethnic sample of 11 dyads attended a 6-hour workshop with instruction in simple and safe techniques for the caregiver to provide comfort and relaxation to the patient. Instruction was interpreted for Spanish and Chinese speakers. Content included safety precautions, preparation, positioning, communication, and techniques for the head, neck, shoulders, back, feet, hands, and acupuncture. The workshop was filmed for editing into an instructional program with a printed manual. A usability evaluation regimen followed with 19 subjects for feedback on design, content and usability of the new materials. A multi-method 20-week trial of the multimedia program with 100 dyads is currently underway. Outcome variables include (1) caregiver attitudes and self-efficacy in use of touch, and caregiver esteem and stress levels; and (2) patient quality of life, stress and salivary cortisol levels. All dyads receive a home-visit safety check by a trained oncology massage therapist.

Results. A 78-minute instructional DVD program (“Touch, Caring and Cancer: Simple Instruction for Family and Friends”) with English, Spanish, Mandarin and Cantonese audio tracks and subtitles, accompanied by a 62 page manual (also translated), was produced. The DVD menu offers 15 user-selectable chapters of content ranging in length from 3 to 11 minutes. In home-based usability testing, subjects were asked to try the materials under observation by one of the instructors, and to give critical feedback and recommendations. The subjects showed strong interest and enthusiasm and were able to perform the techniques with reasonable skill after viewing the instruction. On average the caregivers rated the program features at 85/100 on a standardized usability questionnaire.

Conclusion. Inhibitions about touch in cancer caregiving and unfounded fears about massage in cancer may lead to unnecessary physical and emotional distancing at a time when patients need touch the most. A comprehensive multimedia instruction program has been developed and holds promise to enhance caregiver efficacy, patient satisfaction and quality of life, and the quality of the patient-caregiver relationship.