



Couples and Cancer: Building Partner Efficacy

Grant Number: R44CA103606-03

Abbreviated Abstract

This project has developed and is evaluating the multimedia program, “Touch, Caring and Cancer: Simple Instruction for Family and Friends,” to instruct lay caregivers in safe and informed use of touch and massage as a form of support for cancer patients at home. Eleven caregiver/patient dyads representing diverse ethnicities, ages, relationships, and types and stages of cancer participated in filming live hands-on instruction in a workshop format. Instruction covered safety precautions, positioning, communication, frame of mind, centering, and techniques to promote relaxation and comfort. Techniques were taught for the head, neck, shoulders, back, feet, hands, and acupuncture. A 78-minute DVD with printed manual were then produced to deliver the instruction in English, Spanish and Chinese language versions. In-home usability testing was conducted to refine the materials. The program is currently being evaluated in a mixed-method 20-week trial targeting an ethnically diverse community-based sample of 100 patient/caregiver dyads.

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Total Budget

\$989,296



Research Objectives

AIMS

- 1) Develop a multilingual instructional program (DVD with manual) to teach lay caregivers safe and effective use of touch as a form of support in cancer.
- 2) Evaluate acute effects of partner-delivered massage sessions on patient symptoms and side effects of treatment.
- 3) Evaluate longitudinal effects of the program on caregiver and patient outcomes.

Theory/Hypothesis

Home-based caregiving in cancer is a rapidly expanding societal phenomenon. Simple touch and massage techniques are known to bring significant relief from symptoms and side effects of cancer treatment, but lay caregivers are reluctant to use touch for lack of information and fear of causing harm. This project proposes that caregivers can learn safe and effective techniques for comfort and relaxation of the patient at home via multimedia instruction. Hypotheses are that (1) this educational intervention will lead to increased partner self-efficacy and frequency of use of touch as a form of support, (2) massage delivered by caregivers using the program will produce acute improvements in patient symptoms and side effects, and (3) frequency and duration of practice will predict longitudinal outcomes for both caregiver and patient.

Experimental Design

20 week mixed method study: (1) 4 week randomized controlled trial to evaluate acute effects of partner-delivered massage sessions versus attention control sessions (caregiver reading aloud to patient), on pre-post session patient symptoms and side effects ratings. (2) For weeks 5-20 both groups were combined to evaluate longitudinal effects of using the intervention program.

Final Sample Size & Study Demographics

Target sample: 100 caregiver/patient dyads (50 white, 20 African American, 20 Hispanic/Latino, 10 Asian).

Data Collection Methods

Usability testing: Home visits were conducted with 6 dyads who used the materials under observation by one of the instructors and a usability testing consultant. Users gave feedback and recommendations for refinement of materials, and completed a standardized usability evaluation questionnaire.

Acute outcomes data (patient): Weekly 5x8 session report card rating symptom/side effects immediately pre- and 15 minutes post one 20-minute session. Returned by mail.

Utilization data (caregiver): Weekly 5x8 session report card reporting number of sessions, average duration, viewings of the instructional materials; and for the session reporting acute effects, its duration and areas massaged. Returned by mail.

Longitudinal outcomes data: Standardized and investigator-generated self-report instruments, saliva samples via self-administered filter paper kits. All data submitted via postal mail at baseline, 4 weeks, 12 weeks, 20 weeks.



Safety monitoring data: Home visits by oncology massage therapists were conducted for all dyads during intervention to monitor implementation of safety precautions and adequacy of instruction. An investigator generated report form was used.

Outcome Measures

Caregiver: Caregiver Reaction Assessment “caregiver esteem” subscale, Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), ratings of perceived self-efficacy and attitudes toward use of touch as support, frequency and duration of massage sessions.

Patient: PSS-10, FACT-G (Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy-General), salivary cortisol and DHEA, patient severity ratings of symptoms and side effects of cancer treatment.

Evaluation Methods

Acute effects: (1) Group comparisons of change in pre-post session symptom/side effects ratings with massage versus attention control activity during weeks 1-4. (2) Comparison of change in mean pre-post massage session ratings for all patients during weeks 5-20.

Longitudinal effects: (1) Group comparison of change in survey and saliva testing results from baseline to 4 weeks for massage versus control conditions. (2) Change in results for all subjects from week 4 to weeks 12 and 20.

Within-subject analyses: Discriminant analysis to determine predictors of individual responses to the intervention.

Research Results

Usability testing: 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.

Outcomes: Data collection is on-going at this writing.

Barriers & Solutions

Cultural sensitivity: Instructional materials were screened by consultants from African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Chinese populations.

Languages: DVD, manual, and data collection instruments were translated and administered in Spanish, Cantonese, and Mandarin. The DVD was produced with both voice track and subtitle options. Personnel from subcontracting agencies assisted with administration of the project.

Product(s) Developed from This Research

Touch, Caring and Cancer: Simple Instruction for Family and Friends

Contacto personal, cuidados y cáncer: Instrucciones sencillas para familiares y amigos (Spanish Version)

觸摸,關懷,與癌症:給家庭及朋友之簡易指導 (Chinese Version)