

The Role of Patient Support Networks in Cancer Outcomes

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1

Disclosure

*The Group: Seven Widowed Fathers
Reimagine Life*

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2

Outline

- I. Describe the two types of social support networks
- II. Present key findings from social support network research
- III. Share impact of support from diagnosis, treatment, survivorship
- IV. Discuss fostering social support networks for cancer patients, caregivers, bereaved



3

Social Support Networks

Why are these important?

General state of research;
what is offered to patients



4

Social Support Networks

- Research studies have found that better social support is related to:
 - Lower psychosocial distress
 - Better treatment adherence
 - Better grasp of illness- & treatment-related info
 - Facilitate resilience
 - Engendering sense of empowerment
 - Coping with death and dying



5

Social Support Networks

- There are different theories of how social support leads to better outcomes.
- Wortman's theory of interpersonal relationships
 - Support helps patients cope with uncertainty brought about by cancer diagnosis; support = less uncertainty and reduces compounded distress



6

Two Broad Categories

1. Embedded support networks
 - Family, spouses, friends, neighbors
 - Networks that are established at time of diagnosis
2. Peer support networks
 - One-on-one peer support
 - Peer group support



7

Embedded Support

- Robust embedded social support networks are related to patient's psychosocial adaptation and reducing distress
- Correlation between presence of a dedicated partner/advocate and survival rates
- Providers should encourage/amplify patients' use of embedded networks



8

Peer Support

- Peer support may come in different forms. The most common being one-to-one peer support programs.
- Often involves a cancer survivor offering instrumental and emotional support soon after diagnosis and through treatment.
- Peers may be uniquely situated to provide support that resonates with the patient.



9

Peer Support

- Peer support programs are generally preferred by health care systems because of their perceived benefits and relatively low cost to maintain.
- Several meta-analyses have examined benefits of one-to-one peer support studies.
- Results are generally encouraging, if not overwhelmingly positive.



10

Specific Population Considerations

- Social support networks for the following populations:
 - Patients w/ breast or prostate cancer (most commonly studied)
 - African-Americans
 - Adolescents & young adults
 - Parents of children with cancer
 - Caregivers
 - Bereaved family members



11

Peer support at N.C. Cancer Hospital

- Peer navigation
- Caregiver Conversations
 - Weekly meetings
- Support groups
- Widowed Parent peer support groups



12

www.widowedparent.org



Reimagining Your Future

13

Widowed Parent Support Group



https://youtu.be/ef3J9_i8Yss

14

National Peer Support

- Imerman Angels (imermanangels.org)
- First Descents (firstdescents.org)



15

What next?

Peer support at your location



16

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17

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18