

Psychosocial Support: Providing Complementary Therapies for Cancer Patients in a WA Teaching Hospital, Results from SolarisCare's Eight Years of Experience.

D. J.L. Joske¹, A. S. Petterson², M. Phillips³

1 Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Haematology, Perth, WA, Australia

2, SolarisCare Foundation, Cancer Support Centre, Perth, WA, Australia

3, Western Australian Institute for Medical Research, Biostatistician Perth, WA, Australia

Introduction: SolarisCare is located in a major teaching hospital and provides access to cancer information, raises awareness of the value of psychosocial support and provides supervised complementary therapies for Western Australians with cancer and their carers. SolarisCare is serviced by volunteers, some who 'meet and greet', others provide complementary therapies. SolarisCare has over 120 visitors weekly, about two-thirds access free complementary therapies.

Methods: Using validated Quality-of-Life and Symptom Assessment scales, we assessed the impact of providing complementary therapies for cancer patients in a teaching hospital. Assessments were completed prior to a patient's first session and then after their third and sixth sessions. We report here our results for a period of eight years. (1,800 patients)

Sessions were provided from four therapy groupings: [1] Touch-based 51%. e.g. Bowen therapy, massage, reflexology; [2] Energy-based 39%. e.g. reiki, pranic healing, kinesiology; [3] Mind/body-based 7%. e.g. meditation, art therapy, qi gong and [4] counselling 3%. The sample comprised of patients with a variety of cancers. Breast cancer was predominant

Outcomes: Over a course of 6 complementary therapy sessions, individual symptom distress scores improved; with fatigue showing the most improvement. The Quality-of-Life QoL Scale comprised 7 items empowerment, depression, anxiety, frustration, confusion, coping, relaxed and mean QoL showed a similar, but more pronounced improvement $p < .0001$. Because there was a marked attrition over time an analysis was made for so-called missingness using a multi-variate random-effects model. The results were confirmed. No medical misadventure was recorded.

Conclusion & recommendations: Our data demonstrates a positive impact on participants' quality-of-life together with reduced symptomatology and symptom distress for patients who used the innovative cancer support, accessed through SolarisCare that includes free complementary therapies. This study provides a body of evidence that reveals the journey for Australians with cancer and their carers is improved with this approach.