



## Understanding Psycho-Oncology: Tackling Anxiety with Care

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Numerous physical and mental health issues are brought on by cancer and the medical treatments it receives. These have a profound effect on quality of life and vary from physical discomfort, exhaustion, and loss of autonomy to fear, despair, and stress in interpersonal interactions. Because of this, there has been a sharp rise in the need for psychosocial interventions during the past few decades to treat and support cancer patients and survivors. As a relatively recent interdisciplinary field, psycho-oncology has also emerged thanks to other recent developments. These comprise the following: a shift in emphasis from maximizing survival and life expectancy to enhancing quality of life; de-stigmatization of mental illness and cancer; and modifications to the patient-provider interaction [1].

### Intervention strategies

#### Management of Pain and fatigue

The research is clear that mental distress, despair, anxiety, uncertainty, and hopelessness interact with pain. Multiple meta-analyses and high-quality randomized controlled studies have shown that psychological and cognitive behavioral interventions can lower pain severity while interfering with function. Cognitive behavioral therapy, psychoeducation, hypnosis, relaxation techniques, yoga, and exercise have been found useful in the various stages of the condition [2].

#### Psychological comorbidities and risk of recurrence

Psychiatric comorbidities are prevalent in cancer patients, particularly depressive episodes, anxiety disorders, and adjustment difficulties. There is strong evidence that psychotherapy methods relieve depression symptoms in cancer patients at various stages of the disease. Classical therapeutic treatments, such as cognitive behavioral therapy, have been studied, and more recently, unique treatment programs have been designed. Psychotherapeutic treatment must consider the individual treatment setting, disease stage, physical distress symptoms, and existential threat [3].

### Recent developments

Cancer and the medical treatments it receives can cause a variety of physical and mental health problems. As a result, during the past few decades, the need for psychosocial therapies to treat and support cancer patients and survivors has sharply increased. These include de-stigmatizing mental illness and cancer, improving quality of life rather than focusing on survival and life expectancy, and altering the patient-provider relationship.

### Mindfulness

Over the last 10 to 15 years, specific meaning-oriented psychotherapy therapies aimed at distinct stages of the disease have been created and tested, yielding promising outcomes. Meaning-Centered Psychotherapy, for example, has been proven to benefit cancer survivors as well as those with advanced disease, with improvements not just in meaning-related elements but also in overall distress and depression ratings. Similarly, the program Managing Cancer and Living Meaningfully (CALM) had significant outcomes in a phase 2 study, including increases in spiritual well-being, anxiety, and depression, and is now being evaluated further [4].

### E-Health and Spiritual practices

Practicing yoga has been shown in studies to lower stress reactions and accompanying cardiovascular, immunological, and endocrine alterations while also promoting an enhanced psychological response to stress. For example, a breath-based kriya yoga intervention in patients with mood and/or anxiety disorders included breath practices similar to those used in Shambhavi Mahamudra. The authors noticed a significant reduction in anxiety and depression-related symptoms following intervention. Another kriya yoga trial that used these breath-based approaches found that breast cancer patients reported lower levels of stress and pain than control subjects. The authors also concluded that participating in a 6-week yogic retreat program that included pranayama training and subsequent practice of Shambhavi Mahamudra kriya resulted

in significant reductions in perceived stress and anxiety, indicating that it could be an effective natural treatment for promoting overall well-being [5].

### Conclusion

The future of psycho-oncology will be determined by the recruitment of brilliant young doctors and researchers into the area, as well as support for their retention in their chosen career. The problems to research are many, ranging from prevention to palliative care. Prospective young professionals interested in medicine and psychology should find this a hard field over the next two decades. The assessment tools are in place, and there is a clearer understanding of the 'human' aspect of cancer. The challenges of new cancer treatments will present patients with new psychological issues, which will in turn provide challenges for psycho-oncologists.

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