

Phase 2 pilot study of Pathfinders, a psychosocial intervention for cancer patients

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Condensed abstract: Pathfinders, a multi-faceted psychosocial care program for cancer patients, was feasible and helpful to patients in the academic clinic setting. The intervention had significant impact on psychosocial measures, notably distress and despair.

Abstract

Purpose: Pathfinders is a multi-faceted psychosocial care program for cancer patients; it was developed in community oncology and adapted to the academic oncology setting. This prospective, single-arm, Phase 2 pilot study examined the acceptability and feasibility of Pathfinders for women with metastatic breast cancer.

Methods: Over 3 months, participants completed patient-reported surveys including the Patient Care Monitor (PCM, review of systems), Functional Assessment of Chronic Illness Therapy-Breast Cancer (FACT-B), Self Efficacy, and a single-item survey asking whether patients whether the program was helpful to them. A technology-based data collection system was used to capture electronic patient-reported outcomes at point of care, report symptoms in real time to clinicians, and warehouse data to provide a detailed longitudinal picture of the patient experience when receiving Pathfinders.

Results: Participants (n=50) were: mean age 51 (SD 11); 76% white, 20% black; 74% married; 50% college degree. Forty-two (n=42) patients completed baseline and 3-month assessments. Statistically significant improvements (all $P < .05$) occurred in PCM subscales for Distress (mean [SE]: -3.42 [1.21]), Despair (-4.53 [1.56]), and Quality of Life (2.88 [0.97]), and the FACT-B Emotional Wellbeing subscale (2.07 [0.46]). Of the 29 participants asked if Pathfinders was helpful, 27 (93%) responded positively and 2 did not respond. Other instruments measuring symptoms, quality of life and self-efficacy showed improvement.

Conclusions: In a Phase 2 pilot study, Pathfinders was helpful to patients, and is feasible in an academic medical center. Follow-up data collected at the 3-month assessment suggest that the program impacts various psychological outcomes, notably distress and despair.