

The impact of counselling on anxiety and comorbid depression in patients with life-threatening illnesses in Hong Kong

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Abstract

For the most part, this variety of "female breast cancer incidence worldwide. Anxiety is a major problem for people with breast cancer and has devastating effects on their mental and physical well-being. Anxiety and depression levels among breast cancer patients change as their disease develops, a recent research found (McGregor & Antoni, 2009). Anxiety typically causes physical symptoms such as fatigue, sleeplessness, rapid heart rate, high blood pressure, stomach problems, restlessness, and a sense of helplessness (Sharpley et al, 2009). Multiple studies have shown that persons who suffer from chronic anxiety have a compromised immune system and other physiological regulatory processes (Segerstrom & Miller, 2004). The growing proportion of women who experience anxiety makes it all the more important to study effective treatments "a cancer diagnosis was made.

Reason being: Chinese calligraphy "has the potential to be used as an intervention for anxiety reduction, and has been used for millennia as a spiritual activity to increase self-awareness and self-confidence. Almost all Western-style psychotherapy methods centre on therapeutic conversations

between the therapist and patient. Regardless of the underlying theoretical framework, psychotherapy is primarily a client-centered and therapist-led kind of care that centres on building a trusting, respectful relationship between the two parties involved. The procedure usually starts with a discussion between the doctor and patient. The therapist provides a safe and encouraging space for the client to share their concerns in an uninhibited manner (American Psychological Association, 2017). Verbal "In individualistic societies, where people are encouraged to verbalise their feelings in times of distress, expressive therapies are common and have been proved to be successful.

But in certain Asian societies, "It is considered rude and even childish to express negative feelings aloud or on one's face, especially wrath or sadness. There will be evidence that the calming effects of Japanese culture may be traced back to the country's collectivist social norms, which encourage members to suppress their emotions in public (Ehring, Caffier, Schnulle, Fischer, & Gross, 2010). Increasing emphasis on verbal expression may not be as helpful for people from these

cultures since it may go counter to their values. It's crucial to consider the patient's cultural background and openness to alternative therapies while developing a psychotherapy treatment plan. Even though psychotherapy will continue to be a vocally mediated method, it would be beneficial to use nonverbal strategies to induce positive

changes in populations not very receptive to verbal expressive treatment (Malchiodi, 2006). Studying the effects of Chinese calligraphy on "The major focus of this research is on people of Chinese ancestry who have been diagnosed with breast cancer.

Keyword: Social Norms, Calligraphy, Immune System

INTRODUCTION

In both developed and developing nations, breast cancer is the most frequent cancer among women (World Health Organization, 2014). In addition, it is the leading cause of cancer death among women, with an estimated 508,000 fatalities in 2011. (World Health Organization, 2014). Breast cancer is the most frequent cancer among women in the United States and Canada, accounting for 29 percent of newly diagnosed tumours in the United States and 26 percent in Canada (American Cancer Society, 2014). (Canadian Cancer Society, 2014).

Just like with current East Asian civilizations like Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore, breast cancer is the most frequent malignancy among women. 2.41% of all malignancies newly diagnosed in Hong Kong last year were breast cancers, with 3,014 instances in 2010. (Centre for Health Protection, 2014). Breast cancer is diagnosed in roughly 1,100 Singaporean women each year, accounting for about 20 to 25 percent of all cancer cases in the nation. As a result, the number of breast cancer patients and survivors globally is on the rise (Lim, Devi, & Ang, 2011).

According to the traditional cancer nomenclature, breast cancer refers to abnormal development and proliferation of breast tissue cells (Baqutayan, 2012). For breast cancer, surgery and adjuvant therapies (chemotherapy, radiation, and hormone therapy) are now the major treatments.

Literature Review

There are several negative effects associated with these therapies. For many patients, the physical and psychological changes they must make to their diseases can be affected in a variety of ways by side effects" (Lim et al., 2011).

In spite of advances in medical technology and rigorous therapies, breast cancer sufferers have more obstacles in adapting to their treatment regimen, despite the improved life expectancy (So et al., 2009). When a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer, the disease itself and its

treatment-related symptoms are" the primary sources of stress for her (Li, Zhou, Yan, Wang & Zhang, 2011).

Many women's "emotional morbidity fluctuates as they progress along their disease trajectory, according to a study (McGregor & Antoni, 2009). Among the many symptoms of breast cancer, anxiety is the most common psychological issue felt by patients (Li et al., 2011; Payne & Endall 1998; So et al., 2010). In therapeutic settings, anxiety and depression are commonly co-occurring (Hales, Yudofshy, & Roberts, 2014; Ingram, 2009). Frequently, the two mental disorders" coexist.

According to Ingram (2009), "overlapping diagnostic criteria, such as sleep difficulties, trouble focusing, exhaustion, lack of energy, and so on, may explain for some of the occurrences of this condition. When diagnostic overlap is taken into consideration, however, there is still a significant comorbidity between depressed and anxious states (Ingram, 2009). Depression is often accompanied by symptoms of" anxiety (Doctor, Kahn, & Adamec, 2008).

Unpleasant stimuli can cause "anxiety, which is a healthy response that aids in the development of adaptive responses to new demands. However, if it worsens, it might be hazardous. It may diminish one's capacity to cope with stress if it is excessive and continuous (Lim et al., 2011). The sympathetic nervous system (i.e., elevated heart rate, blood pressure, respiration, and muscular tone), a subjective sense of tension, and thoughts involving anxiety and concern are all characteristics" of anxiety, according to Kazdin (2000).

Statement of the Problem

Throughout the ages, "philosophers and scholars have attempted to define and explain the nature of fear. "Dizziness of freedom" is a term used by Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard in *The Concept of Fear* to characterise uneasiness or dread, and he proposed that self-conscious exercise may alleviate anxiety" (Gron, 1952).

Anxiety at the possibility of "nonexistence is referred to as existential anxiety by Paul Tillich, a theologian. As a consequence, he divided nonbeing consciousness into three categories: ontological (fate and death), moral (guilt and condemnation), and spiritual (spiritual distress) (emptiness and meaninglessness). Existential uneasiness is a fact of existence for everyone, according to Tillich (Wildman, 1994). According to Sigmund Freud, anxiousness is a type of emotional condition. He argued that anxiety is a response to the trauma of" birth, in which the first "risk" is experienced. It's a response that Freud says "will be routinely duplicated in the future when such a scenario arises" (Gagnon, 1998. p.72).

The dread of death and worry about dying, known as thanatophobia, is one of the most universal fears and "may be the root for many phobias, according to a study published in 2008. Several people are afraid of death because of its ambiguous nature. There's nothing shocking about the fact that breast cancer patients are grappling with existential questions because the disease has a profound impact on their physical and psychological well-being. As a therapy for physical

illness, such as cancer and AIDS, meditation has been found to be beneficial (Miller, 1999). Relaxation techniques such as meditation have been studied extensively in the United States over the past several decades to see if they have an effect on stress reactions such as anxiety or "bodily distress."

As part of the Eastern "tradition of interconnectedness, meditation is considered as a way to cultivate attention on any of the three levels: physical, psychological, and "spiritual (Miller, 1999).

"Tapping into universal "potential for the human mind to transcend its preoccupation with negative experiences- with fear, anxiety, anger, and obsession- and to become more comfortable with the experiences of compassion, acceptance, and forgiveness" is Huxley's best description of meditation practise (Miller, 1999, p. 68). In the treatment of chronic pain, addiction, and anxiety disorders, meditation has "been demonstrated to be beneficial (Kabat-Zinn et al., 1992).

Meditation's capacity to "help one step away from one's mental and subjective functioning, and become an observer of one's own ideas, is one of its relaxing benefits. As a behavioural approach known as self-monitoring, in which clients are requested to examine or record their continuing thoughts or behaviours, meditation is comparable to meditation (Miller, 1999). As Davey (1999) points out, Chinese calligraphy is a form of brush meditation that may bring about bodily and psychological calm and "harmony."

Objective of the Study

- To explore the "reduction in anxiety and concomitant depression levels in breast cancer patients following Chinese calligraphy" intervention.

Research Questions

Anxiety and concomitant "depression levels among breast cancer patients in Hong Kong will be evaluated as part of this study. The study question led to the development" of two hypotheses:

- To what extent can "Chinese calligraphy help breast cancer patients in Hong Kong cope with their worry and" depression?

Research Methodology

Patients with breast cancer "who will be participating in this study had their psychophysiological arousal parameters (measured by blood pressure, heart rate, and respiratory rate) recorded at the beginning and end of each session of Chinese calligraphy handwriting. After a 4-week treatment period, participants' anxiety levels will be assessed using the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory and the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scales 21. (after 8-weeks

intervention). Chinese calligraphy is practised in a quiet environment by all participants in this study. There will be 8 consecutive" weekly sessions of calligraphy writing that last 90 minutes each.

During the research time, participants will be also urged to practise calligraphy at home. The data will be analysed using repeated measures ANOVA and paired sample t-tests.

Research Design

There will be breast cancer "patients in the study, few of whom will complete the whole calligraphy intervention, and a one-group repeated-measures design will be used to examine the improvements in anxiety levels. These patients had taken part in an 8-week Chinese calligraphy curriculum before to, during, and following their treatment. Physiological and self-report evaluations will be employed. Over the course of eight 90-minute sessions, participants learned and performed Chinese calligraphy in a serene setting. This study hypothesises that learning Chinese calligraphy handwriting might help alleviate anxiety.

Before and after each calligraphy session, physiological changes, such as heart rate, blood pressure, and respiration rate, will be recorded. Each patient completed the STAI and DASS 21 at baseline (before any intervention), in the middle (at the end of the 4th week session), and after (at the end of the 8th week) the" Calligraphy intervention to assess her psychological anxiety level.

Data Analysis

To test the hypothesis that Chinese "Patient anxiety related to breast cancer treatment may be reduced by calligraphy. It is hoped that the eight-week Chinese calligraphy intervention plan can help patients with breast cancer cope better with their illness and alleviate any accompanying despair or worry. For this purpose, we will compare STAI/DASS 21 scores from before the intervention (in the fourth week) and after it (in the eighth week) to see if our hypothesis holds. Researchers in this study hypothesised that the slow, deliberate motions of writing in Chinese calligraphy would have a calming or postponing effect on the body "stimulation techniques (measured by heart rate, respiration rate and blood pressure).

We utilised the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to "Analyses of variance and paired-samples t-tests were performed on HR, BP, and other psychological and physiological indicators of arousal (total scale and subscale scores on the STAI and the DASS 21). Age,

education, marital status, handedness, medical history, and other demographic data will be characterised using frequency statistics "method of treatment" .

CONCLUSION

Female breasts are the most common site for cancer to begin "most common cancer in females worldwide, and those who are diagnosed and treated for it may face significant challenges. Worry about the side effects of therapy, the disease spreading, or losing control of one's life negatively impacts the immune system and can make breast cancer patients feel exhausted, unhappy, and less hopeful about their prognosis (McGregor & Antoni, 2009). Additionally, in therapeutic contexts, anxiety and depression frequently co-occur (Hales et al., 2014; Ingram, 2009). Anxiety and depression are connected with more severe symptoms, longer" recovery durations, and poorer outcomes in cancer patients, according to a research (Hirschfeld, 2001). (Hirschfeld, 2001).

Therapeutic strategies that work are "essential for breast cancer patients whose quality of life is negatively impacted by anxiety and sadness that often coexists with the disease (Pedersen et al, 2010). Previous research has revealed that the process of writing Chinese calligraphy has significant effects on the author's brain activity, perception, physiological slowdown, and emotional stability (Kao, 2010). Therapy using this approach may help breast cancer patients with anxiety and sadness. The purpose of this research is to determine if practising Chinese calligraphy helps breast cancer patients in Hong Kong cope with their disease and its associated symptoms "sadness.

Limitations of the Study

There are no specific guidelines "for employing Chinese calligraphy as a therapeutic intervention in psychotherapy because it is not an established treatment. Because there are no clear methods to follow, this study has a number of drawbacks. Because Chinese calligraphy has a deep cultural foundation in China, it may be difficult to generalise its benefits beyond countries. Inexperienced" calligraphers may experience stress as a result of the technique (Yang, et al., 2010).

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