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Abstract

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PI Title:

Project Title: SELF TRANSCENDENCE IN BREAST CANCER SUPPORT GROUPS

Abstract: *DESCRIPTION (Adapted from the Investigator's Abstract): The traditional role of cancer support groups is to provide basic information about cancer and treatment, offer emotional support, and teach coping mechanisms. Sharing personal illness experiences with similar others in the support group setting may be a trigger for self-transcendence (ST) and making meaning within the experience of life-threatening illness. Several bodies of literature link ST views and behaviors with physical and emotional well-being. One purpose of this project is to expand the traditional role of cancer support groups by consciously promotion ST views and behaviors, and to document, over time, changes on measures of ST and well-being in support group participants. A second purpose is to explore ways to facilitate ST specifically in African-American women with breast cancer and to study change over time within a cancer support group setting with that population of women. This experimental study will compare the effects, at 3 timepoints (before, at the end of the 8-week program, and 6 months after the intervention), of participation in an intervention breast cancer support group on ST views and behaviors, and physical and emotional well-being on 80 women with 80 women in a "wait list" control group. Structured questionnaires will assess ST, physical well-being, and emotional well-being. Lymphocyte proliferative status will be measured in a subset of 40 participants. Data will be analyzed using correlations, t-tests, MANOVA, and ANOVA. Narrative data from 14 participants, analyzed using phenomenological techniques, will provide context for, and enhance the validity of, questionnaire findings from the three data collection timepoints. A second quasi-experimental study will describe change over 8 months in 40 African-American women participating in support groups tailored specifically for their needs. It is*

anticipated that the findings of this study will support cross-sectional correlational and phenomenological findings from the investigator's previous research and increase knowledge of the relationship of lymphocyte metabolic function to sense of well-being. Recognizing the centrality of ST in the lives of women with breast cancer, and developing techniques to facilitate that concept in their clients, will help health care providers to assist survivors to develop ST views and behaviors that my result in finding purpose and meaning and healing within the context of life-threatening illness.

Thesaurus Terms:

alternative medicine, breast neoplasm, health behavior, human therapy evaluation, meditation, neoplasm /cancer therapy, nursing intervention, social support network African American, coping, emotional adjustment, functional ability, lymphocyte proliferation behavioral /social science research tag, clinical research, female, human subject, questionnaire, women's health

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