

Psychological Support in Cancer Care: Emerging Trends and Future Pathways

Forbes Levin*

Department of Sociology and Social Administration, Kyambogo University, Kampala, Uganda

Introduction

The diagnosis and treatment of cancer can be profoundly life-altering, not only in terms of physical health but also in the psychological and emotional domains of a patient's life. As cancer survival rates improve and treatments become more effective, there is growing recognition of the importance of addressing the psychological well-being of patients across all stages of the cancer continuum from diagnosis to survivorship or end-of-life care. Psychological distress is prevalent among individuals with cancer, often manifesting as anxiety, depression and fear of recurrence, body image issues, existential concerns, and cognitive impairments. These challenges can significantly affect quality of life, adherence to treatment, and even clinical outcomes. In this context, psychological support in cancer care has evolved from a peripheral concern to a central component of holistic, patient-centered oncology. Historically, psychological interventions in cancer care were reactive, often provided only in response to visible distress or after a patient requested support. However, a more proactive and integrated model is now emerging, wherein psychological assessment and support are embedded into routine oncology care. This shift reflects an expanding evidence base that links psychological well-being to better physical health outcomes, as well as a broader societal movement toward comprehensive, person-centered healthcare [1].

Description

Among the most widely utilized psychological interventions in oncology are Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), supportive-expressive therapy, and psychoeducation. CBT, with its emphasis on identifying and modifying maladaptive thoughts and behaviors, has demonstrated effectiveness in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety in cancer populations. Its structured, goal-oriented nature makes it adaptable to different stages of illness and individual preferences. Similarly, MBSR programs, which incorporate mindfulness meditation, body awareness, and yoga, have gained popularity for their ability to reduce stress, enhance emotional regulation, and improve quality of life. These approaches emphasize acceptance and present-moment awareness, offering patients tools to manage uncertainty and cope with the psychological toll of illness. Supportive-expressive therapy, particularly in group settings, provides patients with a safe space to express their emotions, share experiences, and build social connections. It is particularly beneficial for patients facing advanced or terminal disease, as it allows for the exploration of existential concerns, meaning-making, and life closure [2].

In recent years, technological advancements have facilitated the development

***Address for Correspondence:** Forbes Levin, Department of Sociology and Social Administration, Kyambogo University, Kampala, Uganda, E-mail: levinforbes@gmail.com

Copyright: © 2025 Levin F. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Received: 01 February, 2025, Manuscript No. cmcr-25-164114; **Editor assigned:** 03 February, 2025, Pre QC No. P-164114; **Reviewed:** 14 February, 2025, QC No. Q-164114; **Revised:** 22 February, 2025, Manuscript No. R-164114; **Published:** 27 February, 2025, DOI: 10.37421/2684-4915.2025.9.357

and delivery of psychological support through digital health platforms. Telepsychology, online counseling, and mobile health applications have become increasingly prominent, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These platforms enhance accessibility, reduce geographical barriers, and allow for flexible, on-demand support. Digital interventions can include self-guided CBT modules, mindfulness apps, mood tracking tools, and virtual support groups. While digital tools offer convenience and scalability, challenges such as data privacy, digital literacy, and the need for personalized content remain important considerations. Nevertheless, the integration of technology into psychosocial oncology represents a significant step toward democratizing mental health support for cancer patients. Another emerging trend is the incorporation of trauma-informed care into oncology. A cancer diagnosis can be a traumatic experience, triggering symptoms consistent with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), including intrusive thoughts, hypervigilance, avoidance behaviors, and emotional numbness [3].

Trauma-informed psychological interventions recognize the potential for cancer-related trauma and prioritize safety, trustworthiness, empowerment, and collaboration. Techniques such as Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and narrative therapy are being adapted to oncology settings to help patients process traumatic experiences and regain a sense of control. Additionally, recognizing the trauma that caregivers and family members may experience is prompting a broader approach that includes systemic psychological support. Interdisciplinary collaboration is also becoming a hallmark of effective psychological support in cancer care. Psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, palliative care specialists, and oncology nurses increasingly work together to address the multifaceted needs of patients. Multidisciplinary teams can coordinate care, reduce redundancies, and provide more consistent and comprehensive support. Embedding mental health professionals within oncology clinics can facilitate timely referrals, normalize psychological care, and foster a culture where mental health is valued as integral to overall well-being [4].

The role of culture and individual identity in psychological support cannot be overstated. Cancer affects people from diverse backgrounds, and interventions must be culturally sensitive and inclusive. Factors such as language, religious beliefs, family dynamics, and attitudes toward mental health influence how individuals experience illness and engage with psychological services. Culturally tailored interventions, delivered by providers who understand and respect cultural norms, are more likely to be effective and meaningful. Addressing social determinants of health such as income, education, housing, and access to care is also essential to reducing disparities in psychological outcomes among cancer patients. Psychological support is not limited to patients alone; caregivers, families, and healthcare professionals themselves often experience significant distress. Caregivers may face emotional exhaustion, role strain, and anticipatory grief, and are at risk of burnout and depression. Providing psychological support to caregivers is critical for their own health and for the sustained support they provide to patients. Interventions such as caregiver support groups, respite care, and individual counseling can alleviate burden and promote resilience [5].

Conclusion

In conclusion, psychological support in cancer care has evolved into a dynamic, multidisciplinary, and patient-centered domain that is essential for

improving the quality of life and overall outcomes for individuals affected by cancer. Emerging trends reflect a shift toward proactive, integrated, and culturally responsive care that acknowledges the diverse needs and experiences of patients, caregivers, and providers. The increasing use of technology, the incorporation of trauma-informed and strength-based approaches, and the emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration signal a promising future for psychosocial oncology. As the field continues to grow, sustained investment in research, training, policy, and innovation will be vital to ensuring that psychological care remains a cornerstone of compassionate and effective cancer treatment.

Acknowledgement

None.

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

References

1. Sung, Hyuna, Jacques Ferlay, Rebecca L. Siegel and Mathieu Laversanne, et al. "Global cancer statistics 2020: GLOBOCAN estimates of incidence and mortality worldwide for 36 cancers in 185 countries." *CA Cancer J Clin* 71 (2021): 209–249.
2. Wu, Yan, Jun Pan, Ying Lu and Jie Chao, et al. "Psychotherapy for advanced cancer patients: A meta-analysis of the quality of life and survival assessments." *Palliat Support Care* 21 (2023): 301–307.
3. Faller, Hermann, Markus Schuler, Michael Richard and Ulrike Heckl, et al. "Effects of psycho-oncologic interventions on emotional distress and quality of life in adult patients with cancer: Systematic review and meta-analysis." *JCO* 31 (2013): 782–793.
4. Foley, Elizabeth, Alison Baillie, Michael Huxter and Mark Price, et al. "Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for individuals whose lives have been affected by cancer: A randomized controlled trial." *J Consult Clin Psychol* 78 (2010): 72–79.
5. Spiegel, David. "Effects of psychotherapy on cancer survival." *Nat Rev Cancer* 2 (2002): 383–388.

How to cite this article: Levin, Forbes. "Psychological Support in Cancer Care: Emerging Trends and Future Pathways." *Clin Med Case Rep* 9 (2025): 357.