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Survivorship Wellness: Insights from an Interdisciplinary Group-Based Survivorship Pilot Program at a Comprehensive Cancer Center

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THERE IS A RECOGNIZED NEED AND DEMAND for comprehensive cancer survivorship care postactive treatment.^{1–3} After prolonged clinic and hospital visits and life-altering treatments, patients may feel “untethered” from providers and seek guidance to maintain or optimize their health.^{4–6} Survivorship care guidelines recommend follow-up care focusing on surveillance, health behaviors, and lingering effects of treatment.^{7–10} However, many institutions struggle to provide cost-effective comprehensive programming to meet this need.^{2,3}

The University of California-San Francisco’s (UCSF) Psycho-Oncology service, in collaboration with supportive and integrative services across the cancer center, launched a novel group program in 2017 to meet this unmet need. Survivorship Wellness uses an interdisciplinary team approach to address physical, psychologic, and spiritual needs postactive treatment. This program aims to increase patient support through a vibrant community at a critical transition in care, simplify access to existing supportive care resources, assess patient-reported outcomes, and develop sustainable recruitment and clinical service reimbursement.

Survivorship Wellness consists of 8 weekly 90-min sessions of between 8 and 15 participants offering instruction and personalized goal setting for patients, with any cancer diagnosis, who have concluded active treatment. The evidence-based core curriculum, as outlined in Table 1, harnesses the expertise of existing cancer center supportive care resources to address many unmet psychologic, emotional, physical, sexual, social, and spiritual needs common to cancer survivors.^{11–15} Monthly sessions expand on the core curriculum, focusing on specialized topics, including integrative oncology, mindfulness, and late effects of treatment.

Each session is moderated by a clinical psychologist with expertise in health behavior change and goal setting to empower patients with self-management strategies. Inter-

disciplinary comoderators include dietitians, chaplains, exercise specialists, health coaches, and palliative care and integrative oncology providers. Candidates for this program are identified through provider referrals, patient self-referral, distress screening, and survivorship clinic enrollment. Sessions are reimbursable under insurance using health and behavior billing codes, and participation is documented in patients’ medical record.

Since the launch of Survivorship Wellness, 10 cycles of the 8-session curriculum have been delivered. This quality improvement pilot program has enrolled 85 participants to date, 63 of whom have completed at least half of the 8-session curriculum. Data collection is ongoing with regard to participant attendance, satisfaction (as measured after each session), as well as quality of life and other patient-reported outcomes at preenrollment, and 9 and 15 weeks postprogram enrollment.

Current recruitment data, however, suggest that the program is connecting with only a subset of eligible patients. Discussions with referring providers, many of whom are keenly aware of the unique survivorship/postactive treatment needs of their patients, indicate that some considered the program only for select patients, or to be a peripheral program, rather than one systematically built into the care plan and available to all survivors.

Opportunities exist to improve utilization of these group services: first, investigate ways to systematically identify patients approaching end of active treatment and automate those referrals; second, encourage all providers to plan for survivorship care throughout active treatment; lastly, deploy supportive care screenings at end of active treatment to identify patients who may benefit from survivorship services. Ongoing efforts will utilize implementation science best practices to optimize program visibility and partnerships with referring providers.

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TABLE 1. CORE COMPONENTS AND CONTENT OF SURVIVORSHIP WELLNESS SESSIONS

<i>Core survivorship wellness class</i>	<i>Individual participant check-in on behavior change efforts</i>	<i>Psychoeducational content and experiential activities</i>	<i>Individual behavior change goal setting</i>	<i>Guided relaxation or mindfulness practice</i>
Health promotion and wellness goal-setting	✓	Psychoeducation re: facets of health and wellness Exploration of current vs. vital self after cancer Psychoeducation re: goal-setting and cognitive-behavioral-based change processes and strategies	✓	✓
Nutrition	✓	Overview of nutrition as it relates to health for survivors of cancer Overview of AICR and ACS nutrition guidelines Education regarding weight management as a survivor of cancer Education regarding bone health as a survivor of cancer Education regarding fatigue and nutrition as a survivor of cancer Education regarding supplements and probiotics as a survivor of cancer Experiential activities and demonstrations related to nutrition guidelines	✓	✓
Physical activity	✓	Overview of physical activity guidelines as it relates to health for survivors of cancer, including the following components: aerobic, strength training, balance, relaxation, and flexibility Experiential exercises pertaining to exercise guidelines	✓	✓
Managing stress	✓	Overview of stress and stress responses Overview of stress management strategies, including relaxation techniques, cognitive-behavioral strategies, acceptance, mindfulness, gratitude, eliciting social support, exercise, sleeping well, and maintaining a healthy diet	✓	✓
Improving sleep and managing cancer-related fatigue	✓	Psychoeducation regarding the importance of sleep in physical and mental health Psychoeducation regarding physiologic, psychologic, and behavioral contributions to sleep and fatigue CBT-I Cognitive and behavioral strategies for management of cancer-related fatigue	✓	✓
Promoting emotional wellness and managing cancer worry	✓	Psychoeducation and strategies for fostering psychologic flexibility for emotional wellness and managing fear of recurrence Acceptance and commitment therapy Mindfulness	✓	✓
Spiritual wellness	✓	Overview of spirituality and finding meaning and purpose as a cancer survivor Experiential exercises focused on fostering meaning/direction, belonging, and reconciliation	✓	✓
Sexual wellness and body image	✓	Psychoeducation regarding impact of cancer and cancer treatment on body image and sexual wellness Psychoeducation and strategies for fostering sexual and body image wellness after cancer	✓	✓

Author Disclosure Statement

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