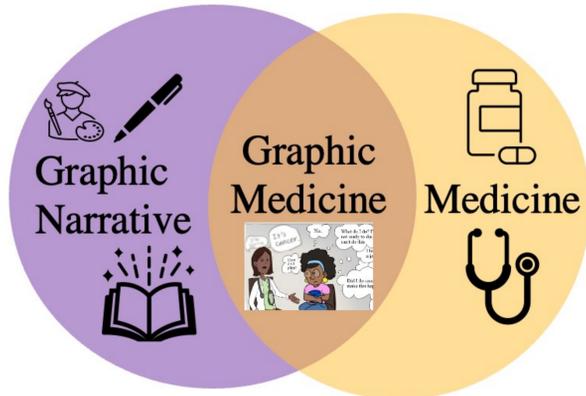


Graphic Medicine: Comics as a Therapeutic and Teaching Tool in Gynecologic Oncology Clinics

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Background

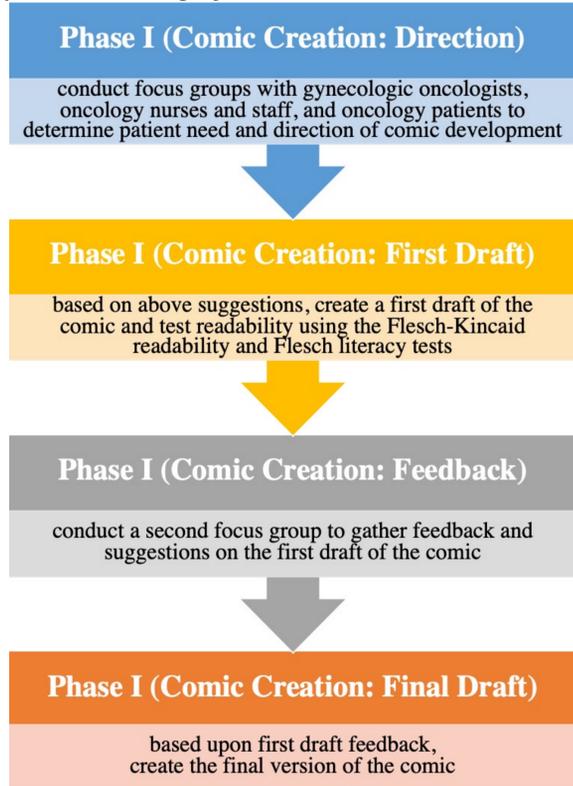
Graphic medicine is a newly emerging field that combines the disciplines of medicine and graphic narratives.



Visual mediums, such as comics, may hold more appeal for visual learners and may help **simplify and explain complex topics**. Thus information told through graphic medicine may be more **accessible** for patient audiences with a wide range of literacy rates—including in Louisiana, which has an average reading level of 4th grade, significantly below that of the national average.

Study Design & Objectives

This project aims to **investigate the potential usefulness of comics as a therapeutic and teaching tool for patients in gynecologic oncology clinics**. The ultimate objective is to create a narrative about a patient with a newly diagnosed cancer. Through a series of comics, readers will follow this patient through her cancer journey. Phase I of the project involved comic creation.



First Draft Feedback

Overall the focus group's feedback was very positive.

Comic Strengths

- illustrations overall
- readable, helpful, and compelling narrative for any age

Comic Areas of Improvement

- increase gender diversity of Fran's support systems
- change physician's facial expression to be more neutral
- add local resources to resource list

Readability Measurements

Readability

Flesch Reading Ease*	82.4
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level**	3.7

***Flesch Reading Ease score** measures readability based upon average length of sentences and average number of syllables per word. A score of 82.4 means "easy to read."

****Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level** assesses approximate reading grade level of a text. A score of 3.7 means third grade.

Final Version of the Comic

The comic strip follows Fran's journey from diagnosis to resilience. Key panels include:

- Diagnosis:** Fran is diagnosed with cancer. She is overwhelmed and asks "WHAT NOW?".
- Support:** Fran joins a local cancer support group. She finds it helpful to share her story and learn from others.
- Coping:** Fran starts journaling and using meditation apps (Insight Timer, Smiling Mind, UCLA Mindful, Aura, Calm, Headspace) to manage anxiety.
- Resilience:** Fran learns to take things one day at a time, reminding herself to be patient and kind. She finds coping mechanisms like journaling, meditation, and calling friends and family.

DO: Yoga, Online support groups, Hobbies, Book club, Church, Humor, Mindset shift, Self compassion, Maintain routine, Accept help, Listen to other survivors, Journal, Talk to a counselor.

DO NOT: Google statistics, Listen to second-hand stories, Stress needlessly, Reject help.

Conclusion and Future Direction

Conclusion

The comic received overall very **positive feedback** from the focus group, which mostly consisted of oncology survivors. Their input was invaluable in determining the direction and development of the comic. Moreover, using well-established readability measures, **we determined that the comic was readable for a patient audience with a wide range of literacy**.

Future Direction

Phase II of the project will involve **distributing the comic in various oncology clinics**. Patients will then be surveyed on the efficacy of this educational material through measurements such as the STAI (State-Trait Anxiety Inventory) Scale as well as Likert scales for knowledge levels, relatability, likability, and helpfulness.