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“Coping and Chemotherapy: A Trilingual Graphic Medicine Approach to Oncology”

In this study, we aimed to investigate the potential usefulness of graphic medicine as a therapeutic and teaching tool for gynecologic oncology patients by creating, distributing, and evaluating a narrative about a patient with a newly diagnosed cancer.

This project was a multistage mixed methods study conducted in five stages. To guide the direction and content of the pamphlet, focus groups were conducted with members of a gynecologic oncology support group consisting of oncology patients, physicians, nurses, and care coordinators. It was determined that a comic on coping strategies would be most useful for patients. Based on group feedback, the first draft of the comic underwent several modifications; it was also translated into Spanish and Vietnamese.

The final pamphlet on coping strategies and an accompanying survey were implemented into several gynecologic oncology clinics at four separate sites, including two community hospitals, an academic teaching hospital, and a multispecialty clinic. Patients of any age and at any stage in their treatment receiving gynecologic oncology care were eligible. The survey included demographic questions as well as questions on the usefulness, relatability, and likability of the comic. Patients also provided feedback to guide improvement for future pamphlets.

For statistical analysis, descriptive statistics were used to summarize the study population. The chi-square goodness-of-fit test was used to determine whether participant responses were evenly distributed or skewed in a particular direction. The ANOVA tests was used to compare participant responses across categories.

155 patients were enrolled and took the survey. Of these, 147 surveys contained analyzable data. Our results suggest that graphic medicine interventions are useful in a gynecologic oncology setting. A significant proportion of participants found the comic useful, relatable, and likable. One of our main takeaways is the importance of delivering inclusive and equitable healthcare on many fronts, including for patients with a wide range of literacy rates, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and language needs. This study was successful in determining that graphic medicine interventions are a feasible method of delivering healthcare information to gynecologic oncology patients.