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“What to know about Chemo: A Trilingual Graphic Medicine Approach to Women’s Oncology”

Graphic medicine is a novel field that merges the principles of medicine and visual arts to create graphic narratives. Using art as a teaching tool allows for deeper exploration of abstract aspects of the patient experience, such as communication, emotion, and self-identity. Despite its potential benefits, there remains a scarcity of research on the role of graphic narratives in medical education and patient care. This project will expand the current literature using an evidence-based approach to graphic narratives as an educational and psychosocial resource for gynecologic oncology patients undergoing chemotherapy.

This work is the second installment in a series of pamphlets developed to support gynecologic oncology patients across several clinical sites in the greater New Orleans area. The first pamphlet addressed the experience of receiving an initial cancer diagnosis and highlighted coping mechanisms and patient resources through the perspective of our main character, Fran. Overwhelmingly positive feedback about the initial pamphlet also indicated a strong desire to follow Fran through the process of undergoing chemotherapy. This installment will also utilize the five-phase design prioritizing the perspectives and needs of patients to ensure that the narrative is authentic and relevant to the community it serves.

The first phase interviews members of a local cancer support group sharing their experiences with chemotherapy to inform the narrative. The second phase focuses on designing the pamphlet and refining it through iterative discussions with members of the support group. In the third phase, the comic and its accompanying survey are translated into Spanish and Vietnamese to enhance inclusivity and accessibility for a larger proportion of our patient population. The fourth phase distributes the comic across four clinical sites in the city, followed by the fifth phase, which involves collecting patient feedback. Building on the data from the first installment revealing the comic to be a powerful educational tool, the second installment will seek to understand current levels of patient literacy surrounding chemotherapy and best practices in providing patients with this information.