

Engaging Men in Psychosocial Cancer Support



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Introduction

Despite increasing rates of cancer survivorship, there is still evidence to suggest men are less likely to access information services, health services and cancer screening. Men may be more reticent to express their emotions in relation to health and specifically in relation to cancer (Yousaf, Grunfeld and Hunter, 2015); and so it is important to ensure that services offer different routes to inclusion.

Maggie's Centres (www.maggiescentres.org) offer a health professional led, multidisciplinary model of holistic supportive cancer care. In 2017 Maggie's received 249,247 visits across the network of Centres in the UK, Hong Kong and Tokyo.

Professionally facilitated support groups for people with cancer are a longstanding part of the Maggie's programme of support because they have a well documented evidence base (e.g. Mustafa, Carson-Stevens and Edwards, 2013) . To hear personal stories of how others have overcome cancer obstacles can be one of the most powerful means of helping people gain confidence that they can overcome similar challenges. Participating in a support group reduces feelings of isolation, but also complement and enhance the supportive relationships a person may have amongst family and friends (Takanawa, et al, 2010).

Aim

To explore whether Maggie's professionally facilitated weekly male-specific support groups provide a constructive environment within which men can engage with holistic support.



Methodology



Results

Participant demographics

39 male participants

12 participants in focus group discussion

Participants with curative and non-curative cancers were included

Participants came from various different socioeconomic backgrounds

Self Reported feedback revealed that the men reported high levels of satisfaction in relation to:

Practical Support: 95%

Emotional Support : 95%

Social Support: 91%

Thematic analysis gave insight into the reasons why men attend the groups:

- Reducing isolation and developing a sense of belonging
- Creating shared experience and understanding
- Safely expressing emotion
- Protecting loved ones from distress
- Use of male specific language and humour

Conclusions and research implications

Support needs of men are changing, the Maggie's model offers valuable lessons generalisable across settings to meet these emerging needs. Although this small study has methodological limitations, findings stress the importance of giving men the opportunity to gain social support through professionally led groups that create a safe space to share and discuss tailored male themes. The study also helps inform the design of larger scale, controlled and longitudinal research.

References

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