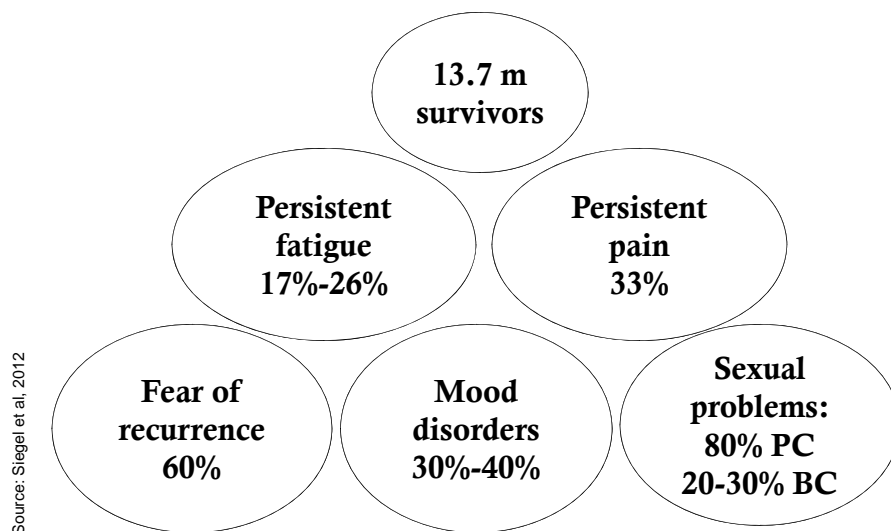


RCT Comparing Two Online Support Groups for Distressed Breast Cancer Survivors: The Benefits of “Me Time”

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Burgeoning Population of Cancer Survivors Have Many Unmet Needs



Internet-based Interventions Feasible, Practical, Economical

79% U.S. adults use the internet¹

83% of users seek health
information¹

Over 200,000 cancer ISGs³

8.1% of cancer survivors use ISGs⁴



Sources: ¹Pew, 2010; ¹Pew, 2011; ³Im et al, 2007; ⁴Chou et al 2011

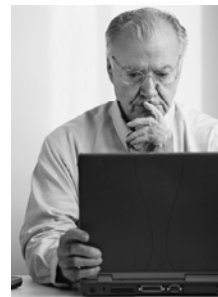
Use of ISGs Has Outpaced Research

Systematic review of ISGs and psychosocial
outcomes (24 studies; 5 RCTs)

Some evidence of mental health benefit

No evidence of harm

Poor study quality



Source: Hong et al 2012

Breast Cancer ISG RCTs



Facilitated ISG + depression¹

Self-guided ISG = QoL²

Self-guided ISG = distress, QoL³

Self-guided ISG = mood⁴

¹Winzelberg et al, 2003; ²Gustafson et al, 2001; ³Salzer et al, 2009; ⁴Hoybe, 2010

Novel Prosocial Facilitated Cancer ISG



Research and practice emphasize the benefits of receiving social support

“Helper therapy principle” suggests there are benefits of providing social support (e.g., improved affect, self-esteem, sense of belonging)

Will increasing opportunities to provide help enhance outcomes in a facilitated cancer ISG?

Aims

Test whether a facilitate prosocial ISG is more effective at reducing distress in breast cancer survivors than a standard facilitated supportive-expressive ISG

Identify potential psychological and behavioral mediators of the group differences.



Participant Flow

Baseline Interview (n=183)

Distressed, stage 1-2, <65 yrs, < 3 yrs post diagnosis

Randomization

Supportive-Expressive
(6 Groups ~ 14 members)

Prosocial
(6 Groups ~ 14 members)

1 Month Follow-up Interview (n=160)

Groups Share Common Structure



Chat: Six 90-min weekly synchronous sessions (coping with side effects, depression/anxiety, relationships)



Discussion board: 7 weeks, asynchronous



Facilitated by supervised Master's-level professionals

The screenshot shows the website for the Life Beyond Cancer Online Community. At the top left is a logo of two hands holding each other, with the text "Life Beyond Cancer" below it. The main header is "Life Beyond Cancer Online Community" with navigation buttons for "New Topic", "Unsubscribe", and "Admin Tools". A user greeting box on the left says "Welcome, Steve. You last visited: 5 Days Ago at 02:54 PM" with a "Log Out" button. Below that is a sidebar with "Home", "Support/Discussion Groups" (highlighted), and "Manage My Profile". The main content area is titled "Life Beyond Cancer Online Community" and "Online Support Group 1". It features a "Chat Now!" button and a "View previous chat session transcripts" link. Below this is a table of discussion topics:

Topics	Last Post
Support Group Meeting Transcripts Topic started by: Lynn Replies: 0, Views: 281	09-30-2011 by Lynn
I've learned a little about myself Topic started by: Laing Replies: 5, Views: 62	12-14-2011 by Lisa
body image Topic started by: Angelica Replies: 6, Views: 78	12-01-2011 by Angelica

Prosocial

Tips on giving support
Helpful DB post
Outreach CDC e-card
Facilitator emphasized
attending to others' needs

Supportive-Expressive

Tips on getting support
Private journal
Fact sheet BC self care
Facilitator emphasized
self-expression



Prosocial Groups were More Helpful than Supportive Expressive Groups

Helping behavior (SOL)	Supportive-Expressive	Prosocial
Emotional support posts (mean)	32.1	38.3*
Companionate support posts (mean)	20.9	26.5**
Informational support posts (mean)	8.9	11.1+
Total support (mean)	61.9	75.9**

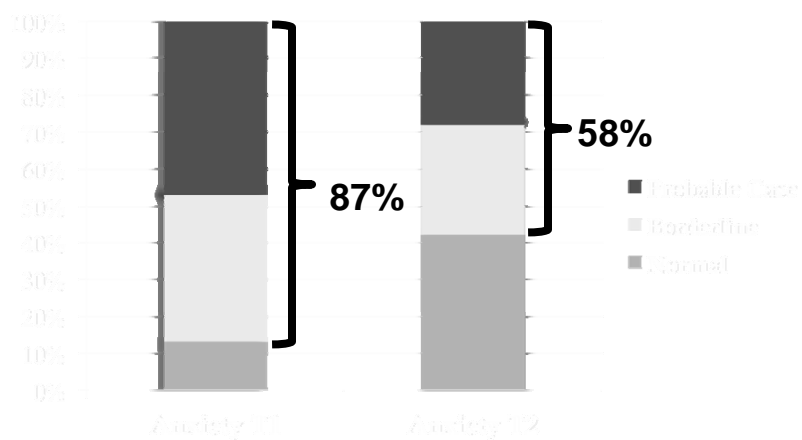
+p<.01; *p<.05; ** p<.01

Prosocial Groups' Posts were More Other than Self Oriented

Pronoun (LIWC)	Supportive-Expressive	Prosocial
First person: "I" (mean)	226.0	206.9**
Second person: "you" (mean)	43.8	51.6**

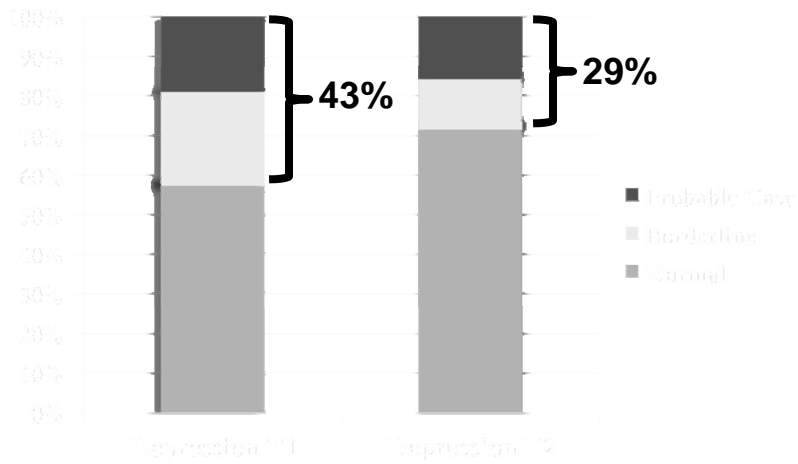
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Overall Improvements in Anxiety



McNemar's test, $p < .001$

Overall Improvements in Depression



McNemar's test, $p < .001$

Effect of Condition on T2 Symptoms, Controlling T1 Symptoms

<u>Outcome</u>	<u>B (Unst.)</u>	<u>t(M.I. df)</u>	<u>p-value</u>	<u>95% C.I.</u>
Depression	1.00	1.99 (151.1)	.05	.004 - 1.99
Anxiety	1.06	1.86 (150.2)	.06	-.06 - 2.18

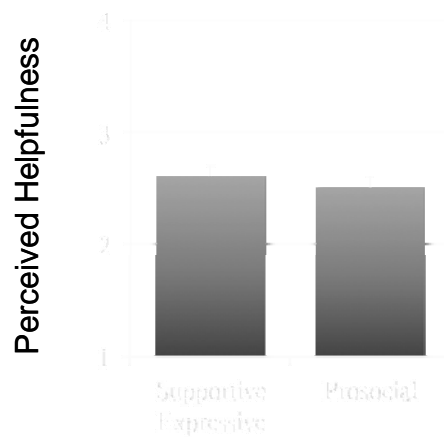
Supportive expressive improved more than prosocial by ~ 1 point

Helping Manipulation May Have Constrained Emotional Expression

Emotion expressed (LIWC)	Supportive-Expressive	Prosocial
Negative emotion (mean)	61.8	55.5**
Positive emotion (mean)	110.6	117.4+

+ $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Manipulation too Subtle to Change Perceived Helpfulness



Preliminary Conclusions

Participants in ISGs showed substantial declines in anxiety and, to a lesser extent, in depression.

Increasing helping does not appear to improve the efficacy of supportive-expressive ISGs

Increasing helping may constrain the expression of negative emotions and addressing one's own needs



Future Directions

Conduct additional comparative studies to further enhance the benefits of cancer ISGs

Meditation/relaxation (reduce avoidance)

Modeling disclosure (reduce avoidance)

Cognitive behavioral training (reframing)

Evaluate methods of improving peer-led groups

Provision of group organization tools

Hybrid facilitated/self-help group

Collaborators & Support



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Grants CA15887, CA158361