The Chemotherapy Care Project: using a touchscreen computer to assess patients' physical and psychosocial symptoms

Sallie Newell
Southern Cross University

Rob William Sanson-Fisher
University of Newcastle

Afaf Girgis
University of Newcastle

John Stewart
Mater Misericordiae Hospital, Newcastle

Stephen Ackland

See next page for additional authors

Publication details
The Chemotherapy Care Project: Using a Touchscreen Computer to Assess Patients’ Physical and Psychosocial Symptoms

Dr Sallie Newell, Prof Rob Sanson-Fisher, Dr Afaf Girgis (CERP); Dr John Stewart, Dr Anthony Bonaventura, Dr Stephen Ackland (Mater Hospital)

Clinical Oncological Society of Australasia’s 24th Annual Scientific Meeting (November 1997)

**METHODS**

Eligible patients attending clinic asked to participate:
- not their first visit to clinic,
- sufficient English language skills,
- considered mentally and physically capable by their oncologist.

For all studies, consenting patients completed computer survey assessing:
- 12 physical symptoms (duration and severity in last week),
- anxiety & depression (Hospital Anxiety & Depression Scale - HADS),
- perceived needs (Cancer Needs Questionnaire - CNQ).

For Study 1, consenting patients completed a paper survey assessing acceptability of computer survey.

For Study 3, oncologists completed dedicated survey after consultation assessing their perceptions of each patient’s level of each physical & psychosocial symptom.

**AIMS**

STUDY 1 RESULTS: Acceptability

- N = 229 - 98% of patients doing computer survey.
- 97% easy to complete.
- 76% enjoyable.
- 8% too long to do.
- 3% too personal.
- 98% a good way for doctors to get this information.
- Answered all the questions truthfully.
- Happy for doctor to get a summary of results.
- Happy to do the survey at each visit.
- Needed a lot of help to do the survey.
- Half for follow-up visits.
- Patient recruited over 7 months.

STUDY 2 RESULTS: Prevalence

- N = 204 - 94% of patients asked to participate.
- Agreement was significantly higher when:
  - the oncologist knew the patient better.
  - the oncologist felt a better rapport with the patient.
  - the oncologist felt less pressured by their workload.

STUDY 3 RESULTS: Oncologists’ Awareness

- N = 204 - 94% of patients asked to participate.

**CONCLUSIONS**

- Medical oncology outpatients do experience a wide range of physical and psychosocial problems.
- Oncologists’ perceptions don’t always reflect patients’ reported problems.
- The touchscreen computer survey trialed represents an acceptable way of assessing patients’ levels of such problems.

**THE NEXT STEP**

- RCT to test the effectiveness of giving printed feedback, from such patients surveys, to oncologists at reducing the problems experienced by their patients.