Feasibility Study of an Online Intervention to Support Male Spouses of Women With Breast Cancer

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This research was funded by the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, Alberta/Northwest Territories.

Duggleby, Ghosh, Nekolaichuk, Cumming, Thomas, Tonkin, and Swindle contributed to the conceptualization and design. Duggleby, Struthers-Montford, Nekolaichuk, Cumming, Tonkin, and Swindle completed the data collection. Duggleby and Ghosh provided statistical support. All authors provided analysis and contributed to the manuscript preparation.

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Submitted December 2016. Accepted for publication June 27, 2017.

Keywords: male spouses; breast cancer; quality of life; online intervention; feasibility

ONF, 44(6), 765–775.
doi: 10.1188/17.ONF.765–775

Purpose/Objectives: To evaluate the feasibility of a web-based psychosocial supportive intervention entitled Male Transition Toolkit (MaTT).

Design: Randomized, controlled trial, mixed methods, concurrent feasibility design.

Setting: Edmonton, a large metropolitan city in western Canada.

Sample: 40 dyads (women with breast cancer and their spouse).

Methods: Male spouse participants in the treatment group accessed MaTT for four weeks. Data on hope, quality of life, general self-efficacy, and caregiver guilt were collected at baseline and days 14, 28, and 56. Quality-of-life data were collected from the women with breast cancer at each time period. Qualitative data were collected from the usual care group in an open-ended interview and from the treatment group in an evaluation survey on days 14 and 28.

Main Research Variables: Feasibility, as measured by the MaTT questionnaire.

Findings: Evaluation survey scores indicated that MaTT was feasible, acceptable, and easy to use. Male spouse quality-of-life scores were not significantly different between groups. As guilt scores decreased, male spouses’ quality of life increased.

Conclusions: The findings provided useful information to strengthen MaTT and improve study design. Additional research is needed to determine its efficacy in improving male spouses’ quality of life.

Implications for Nursing: MaTT is a feasible intervention. Future research should evaluate MaTT with larger samples as well as determine the amount of time participants used MaTT.

Male spouses of women with breast cancer undergo sudden changes as a result of their partner’s diagnosis (Duggleby, Bally, Cooper, Doell, & Thomas, 2012; Duggleby et al., 2015; Struthers-Montford et al., 2016), including changes in their roles, responsibilities, relationship to their partner, and mental health (Duggleby et al., 2015). They also can feel powerless, uncertain, and isolated (Duggleby, Bally, et al., 2012; Duggleby et al., 2015; Zahlis & Lewis, 2010). Male spouses require strategies and interventions that help them engage in hope, communicate with their partners, find support, and access information about breast cancer (Duggleby, Bally, et al., 2012; Duggleby et al., 2015). However, few resources and interventions are available to help them during this time of significant changes (Duggleby, Bally, et al., 2012; Duggleby et al., 2015).

Cochrane and Lewis’s (2005) systematic review of intervention studies for male spouses of women with breast cancer reported four studies published from 1966 to 2004. They found a consensus within the literature that interventions for male spouses are needed, with research in this area lagging “far behind descriptive work” (p. 331). The four interventions discussed by Cochrane and Lewis (2005)