The Effect of a Psychosocial Group Intervention on Loneliness and Social Support for Japanese Women With Primary Breast Cancer

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Numerous investigators have reported that patients with cancer have many psychosocial concerns, such as intrapsychic (e.g., anger, fear of dying), interpersonal (e.g., loneliness, communication with family and friends), and social concerns (e.g., isolation, stigma caused by cancer) (Cella & Yellen, 1993). However, most investigators who studied psychosocial group interventions for patients with cancer have focused on improving anxiety, depression, and coping behaviors. Published meta-analyses and review articles express clear evidence that group interventions for patients with cancer are effective in reducing anxiety and depression and enhancing coping behaviors (Bottomly, 1997; Fawzy & Fawzy, 1998; Meyer & Mark, 1995; Sheard & Maguire, 1999; Spiegel, 1995; Trijsburg, Van Knippenberg, & Rijpma, 1992). Despite the recognized presence of various psychosocial concerns, little attention has been paid to demonstrating the effects of improving these concerns as research outcomes.

Loneliness is one of the major psychosocial concerns among patients with cancer. Several investigators have observed that many patients suffer from loneliness associated with illness or illness-related situations (Cuevas-Renaud, Sobrevilla-Calvo, & Almanza, 2000; Fox, Harper, Hyner, & Lyle, 1994; Friedman, Florian, & Zernitsky-Shurka, 1989; Perry, 1990). Researchers have reported that group interventions are important for people who are suffering from loneliness (Keele-Card, Foxall, & Barron, 1993; Kim, 1999; Koopman, Hermanson, Diamond, Angell, & Spiegel, 1998; Prince, Sakiko Fukui, PhD, RN, is a lecturer in the School of Nursing at the Tokyo Metropolitan University of Health Sciences in Japan; Makiko Koike, MA, is an associate professor in the School of Psychology at Mejiro University in Tokyo; Akira Ooba, MA, is a clinical psychologist at the National Cancer Center Hospital East in Kashiwa, Japan; and Yosuke Uchitomi, MD, PhD, is chief in the Psycho-Oncology Division at the National Cancer Center Research Institute East in Kashiwa. This work was supported by a Grant-in-Aid for Cancer Research (9-31) and Second-Term Comprehensive 10-Year Strategy for Cancer Control from the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare. (Submitted March 2002. Accepted for publication November 26, 2002.) (Mention of specific products and opinions related to those products do not indicate or imply endorsement by the Oncology Nursing Forum or the Oncology Nursing Society.)

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