Advances in Psychological Aspects of Geriatric Oncology

Jimmie Holland, M.D.
Wayne E Chapman Chair in Psychiatric Oncology
Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center
New York, New York
The Majority of Diagnoses are in Older Adults

53% of cancer diagnoses were in individuals ≥65 years old in 2012

Total people diagnosed with cancer: 1.6 million

Cancer diagnoses ≥65 years old: 868,000
The Majority of Cancer Survivors are Older Adults

Total Cancer Survivors: 13.7 million

59% of cancer survivors were ≥65 years old in 2012

Cancer Survivors ≥65 years old: 8+ million
Crisis in Cancer Care

- Aging population
- Workforce shortages
- High cost of increasingly complex care
- Psychosocial "total care" lags behind
“Older people are the only increasing natural resource in the world”

Linda Fried, PhD
Dean, Columbia School of Public Health
The Geriatric Psychiatry Team
2008 - Present

Members:

Jimmie Holland, MD
Andrew Roth, MD
Christian Nelson, PhD
Liz Harvey, PhD
Stephanie Napolitano, MA
Talia Weiss, BA
Mindy Greenstein, PhD
Anne Martin, PhD
Tatiana Starr, BA

Goal: Design Psychosocial Interventions for Elders
CARE Model

**DISTRESS**
- Poor coping with aging and illness/cancer
- Feelings of social isolation
- Regrets about life lived
- Bitterness facing uncertainty and mortality
- Sad/depressed

**INTERVENTION**
- Identify and use coping tools that worked before
- Reframe issues of aging/illness
- Problem solve daily challenges
- Strengthen social ties
- Put past into a tolerable perspective
- Process uncertainty about mortality

**OUTCOME**
- ↑ COPING
- ↑ SOCIAL CONNECTION
- ↑ QOL
- ↓ DEPRESSION

**ACHIEVEMENT**
- Coping well with infirmity and illness
- Maintaining connections
- Accepting life as lived
- Finding pleasure/humor
- Living with equanimity despite uncertainty
- Decreased depressive symptoms
Five Sessions: Delivered by Phone
Manual for Therapist and Patient

1. Life story
2. Coping; reframing; problem solving
3. Loneliness / losses; strengthen
4. Making peace with the life lived; appreciating meaningful aspects; finding pleasure / humor
5. Reflection on sessions; plans to implement; lessons learned
# Subject Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N by Group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Care</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean age (years)</td>
<td>76 ± 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>95% Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Status</td>
<td>28% Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18% Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31% Divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23% Widowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>77% College Degree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HADS Depression

Baseline-Follow-up 1: $p = 0.01$, $d = 0.59$
Baseline-Follow-up 2: $p = 0.20$, $d = 0.27$
Baseline-Follow-up 1: $p = 0.44$, $d = 0.15$
Baseline-Follow-up 2: $p = 0.10$, $d = 0.42$
Baseline-Follow-up 1: $p = 0.27$, $d = 0.23$
Baseline-Follow-up 2: $p = 0.04$, $d = 0.46$
Loneliness

Baseline 2m

Loneliness

Contol
Intervention

Loneliness

Baseline
2m
Clinical Observation

- Elders are often ay home alone; socially isolated
- They report being lonely
- Bored yet unable alone to initiate intellectual activities (reading)
- How to counter boredom and loneliness?
“Vintage” Readers Book Club

“Vintage” elders and “Vintage” classic books

Started March, 2012

• Big font readings mailed one month in advance
• May come or call in to monthly meetings
• Lunch is served
Positive Changes

• Patients see self and problems in a broader context – historical and cultural
• More aware of universals of the human condition; stimulating discussions with others
• Stimulated to read at home
• Found elders were coping remarkably, well with “Grit and Grace” and humor – confirmed by recent research
The U-bend: self reported well-being, on scale of 1-10

The U-bend
Self-reported well-being, on a scale of 1-10

Mission of Book

- Reduce fears of aging and ageism
- Encourage elders to respect their character strength / virtues which have sustained them through their lives
- Encourage dialogue between younger and older
Lighter As We Go
Virtues, Character Strengths, and Aging
Mindy Greenstein PhD
Jimmie Holland MD

Oxford University Press
2014
“Beautiful young people are accidents of nature, but beautiful old people are works of art.”

-Eleanor Roosevelt