

Nurses boost well-being for cancer survivors

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The Queensland University of Technology (QUT) School of Nursing and Midwifery, in Brisbane, Australia, has designed a program to assist cancer survivors in self-managing their health and emotional concerns.

Participants in this [pilot program](#) have reported a lower need for ongoing information and emotional support, compared to those who did not take part in the program.

"There are a range of post-treatment effects people might experience, in the short term and potentially even in the long term, including fatigue, difficulty sleeping, weight gain or weight loss, menopausal symptoms, and peripheral neuropathy - tingling and [painful sensations](#) related to changes to [nerve endings](#)," lead investigator Professor Patsy Yates said.

"There are also emotional effects: things like loss of confidence in your body and dealing with a changed perception of your health."

Professor Yates said the main aim of the QUT research, which was funded by the Federal Department of Health and Ageing, was to develop people's skills in managing these sorts of issues themselves.

"Self-management is important because when you finish treatment, you do continue to be monitored - usually by your GP - but you no longer have the same regular contact with health professionals that you were having during your treatment," she said.

"For the purposes of this research project we delivered a training

program for nurses from Toowoomba Hospital and Princess Alexandra Hospital (Brisbane) who were [cancer care](#) coordinators, to give them techniques to teach self-management skills to patients.

"Nurses who received that training worked with 32 patients to develop end-of-treatment care plans, in a one-off consultation. Within that care plan they focused on the concerns and effects being experienced by each patient, and developed specific strategies to deal with those.

"The nurses were also available for follow up phone calls, if required."

A further 35 patients in a comparison group didn't receive this intervention.

"The main thing we found was that 64 per cent of people who received the intervention had no need for further information about how to manage the effects they were experiencing, whereas only 45 per cent in the comparison group felt they had no need for further information," Professor Yates said.

"There was also a lower proportion of patients from the intervention group who felt they needed emotional support from others. We found that 34 per cent of patients who received the intervention reported their need for [emotional support](#) had decreased following the intervention, while seven per cent of those in the comparison group reported an increase in their need for support.

"We also sent the patients' care plans to their General Practitioners (doctors), who were asked to provide us with some feedback. All of the GPs who responded rated it as being very useful."

The QUT research team has gone on to develop an online educational program which will eventually be accessible to all nurses on an

Australian Government website.

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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