

Coming through cancer... together

November 10 2011, By Emma Thorne



The role that emotional support plays in helping a patient in their fight against breast cancer is to be examined as part of a year-long research project at The University of Nottingham.

Second-year applied [psychology](#) PhD student Prema Nirgude is recruiting people who have overcome the illness, and their partners, to talk about how they coped following the diagnosis and supported one another during treatment.

The research could be used to develop new strategies for [patients](#) and their spouses who find it particularly difficult to cope during the dark days of the disease.

Prema said: “Breast cancer is known to have an often devastating effect not only on the patient but also close friends and family — in particular, because of the intimate nature of their relationship, the patient’s spouse is often seriously affected by the diagnosis.

“However, there is little research that demonstrates how the patient and spouse cope together and support one another after [diagnosis](#). This research aims to explore the relationship to widen our understanding of coping and adjustment within the couple.

“This could be particularly important as previous studies have shown that strong support from a patient’s social network of friends and family can result in a more hopeful prognosis.”

Prema is appealing for patients who have overcome breast cancer and are now in remission — and their spouses and partners — to come forward to be interviewed about their experiences for the study.

Patients and their partners will either travel to the Institute of Work, Health and Organizations on the University’s Jubilee Campus or will be interviewed by a researcher in their own home, whichever they prefer.

Prema added: “The couples will be expected to talk about their experiences of dealing with breast cancer, particularly their social support, coping mechanisms and the impact on their relationship and how they coped — or perhaps did not cope — together. I am hoping that the chance to help future [breast cancer](#) patients may encourage people to come forward to volunteer for this important study.”

It is hoped that by examining the role of spousal support the researchers will be able to develop coping strategies that couples can use to help one another through the various stages of the disease and make recommendations to doctors on how they could better support patients and their partners.

Provided by University of Nottingham

Citation: Coming through cancer... together (2011, November 10) retrieved 19 April 2024 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-11-cancer_1.html

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.