

# Screening tool does not cut distress in cancer patients

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Distress monitoring and needs assessment using the Distress Thermometer and Problem List does not appear to be cost-effective in improving mood states in cancer patients, according to research published online Sept. 3 in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

(HealthDay)—Distress monitoring and needs assessment using the Distress Thermometer and Problem List (DT&PL) does not appear to be cost-effective in improving mood states in cancer patients, according to research published online Sept. 3 in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

William Hollingworth, Ph.D., of the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom, and colleagues randomly assigned 220 [cancer](#) patients starting radiotherapy or chemotherapy to an intervention group (112 patients) or a control group (108 patients). The effect of a 25-minute intervention with the DT&PL on patient outcomes and health care costs was assessed.

The researchers found that, among the patients receiving the intervention, one-third reported high levels of distress; most patients reported physical (84 percent) or emotional (56 percent) problems. No evidence of an effect of the DT&PL was observed for psychological distress, quality of life, or health care costs. Fewer than 3 percent of patients in either group were referred to a clinical psychologist.

"Needs can be identified using short, simple, and inexpensive screening tools," writes the author of an accompanying editorial. "However, results need to be followed-up with further assessment of specific needs and appropriate referral and treatment."

**More information:** [Abstract](#)  
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