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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Editorial

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