

BACKGROUND

Survivorship programs aim to support the cancer patient transitioning from acute treatment to survivorship care in the community. Delivery of survivorship care has been recognised as an area of healthcare in need of development where current models may fail to meet the needs of survivors with little research in this field.

Breast Cancer Care is the only UK-Wide charity providing specialist information and support for people affected by breast cancer supporting them in their day-to-day life management and emotional upheaval of breast cancer and healthcare professionals who care for them.

Moving Forward Course helps people to adjust to life after hospital-based treatment. It is provided in partnership with NHS trusts and health boards across the UK. Information and support encouraging self-management of ongoing physical and emotional issues is provided in four sessions over four weeks sharing their experiences with peers in a safe and caring environment.

The objective of this pilot study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Breast Cancer Survivorship Program and how to enhance it further.

METHODS

All women who attended the Moving Forward Course between November 2015 and May 2018 were contacted by telephone with regards to evaluating the effectiveness of the impact of the course. Face-validated questionnaires were sent by post to those wishing to take part that focussed on four aspects of cancer survivorship – physical, social, psychological and spiritual well-being. Quantitative data was analysed using a 5-Likert Scale and qualitative data through free text at the end of the questionnaire.

RESULTS

Thirty-seven questionnaires were returned for analysis. The results of the four themes of physical, social, psychological and spiritual well being are summarised in Table 1.

Physical well being – the majority of women have kept physically active (95%), returned back to full activity (79%) and following a balance diet (86%). Most are not in pain (67%), able to sleep (56%) but report fatigue (70%). **Social well being** – The majority were confident in their appearance (67%), have a good support network (86%), able to speak to friends and family (81%), do not feel isolated (67%) and have confidence in their intimate relationship (51%). **Psychological well being** - Most patients had a good understanding of the side effects of treatment (86%), confident keeping breast aware (86%), aware of the signs and symptoms of recurrence (54%). However many worried about cancer recurrence (97%) and anxious of the future (65%). There was good knowledge of available support (94%) and felt support was readily accessible (89%). **Spiritual well being** – respondents did not feel more religious/spiritual (43%). Most understood the meaning of their diagnosis (75%) but felt uncertainty (57%). Some had gained inner strength (51%), majority were hopeful of the future (73%) and their perspective of life had changed (75%).

The main themes highlighted from the qualitative data was the establishment of an important support network course with fellow attendees. Some felt the course would have been useful when they were first diagnosed, others felt it would have been too much information at the time of diagnosis. Some felt the course could be adapted to account age differences, those that were working and have a program for partners. Others felt it would be useful to have a rolling program they could access as required.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Physical Wellbeing	1	2	3	4	5
I am keeping physically active	0%	5%	0%	57%	38%
I have/am returning back to full activity	0%	13%	8%	30%	49%
I am able to sleep	8%	13%	22%	32%	24%
I often feel tired	3%	13%	13%	57%	13%
I am in pain most days	35%	32%	11%	11%	11%
I am following a balance diet	0%	8%	5%	59%	27%
Social Well Being	1	2	3	4	5
I have confidence in my appearance	5%	16%	11%	51%	16%
I have a good support network	0%	5%	8%	32%	54%
I often feel isolated	27%	40%	8%	22%	3%
I am able to talk to family and friends	3%	8%	8%	43%	38%
I am aware of financial help available	3%	16%	24%	49%	8%
I feel confident returning/have returned back to work	5%	8%	32%	32%	22%
I feel confidence in my intimate relationship(s)	14%	11%	24%	35%	16%
Psychological Well Being	1	2	3	4	5
I feel able to cope in stressful situations	11%	19%	19%	51%	0%
I have a good understanding of the side effects of treatment	0%	5%	8%	59%	27%
I am confident keeping breast aware after treatment	0%	5%	8%	54%	32%
I am aware of the signs and symptoms of breast cancer recurring elsewhere in the body	0%	27%	19%	38%	16%
I worry about cancer recurrence	0%	0%	3%	57%	40%
I have a good knowledge about available support	0%	0%	5%	70%	24%
I feel support is readily accessible	0%	3%	8%	65%	24%
I feel in control of my life	0%	24%	22%	46%	8%
I am anxious about the future	5%	8%	22%	54%	11%
Spiritual Well Being	1	2	3	4	5
I feel more religious/spiritual	19%	24%	24%	24%	8%
I am hopeful of the future	0%	8%	19%	62%	11%
I have gained inner strength since my cancer diagnosis	3%	16%	30%	32%	19%
I understand the meaning of my diagnosis	0%	8%	16%	43%	32%
I feel conflict between my religion and diagnosis	43%	19%	38%	0%	0%
I feel my perspective on life has changed	0%	3%	22%	35%	40%
I feel uncertainty in my life	3%	24%	16%	49%	8%

Table 1 – Outcome of questionnaires focussing on four aspects of breast cancer survivorship



Figure 1 – A selection of comments from patients attending Moving Forward Course

CONCLUSIONS

This pilot study has shown that a breast cancer survivorship programme is effective for physical, social, psychological and spiritual well-being even many months after the course. This forms the foundations for a larger focus group study to help implement and continually improve a programme that breast cancer survivors feel is effective and will be long-lasting.

REFERENCES

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