Implementing Dementia-Friendly Care Approach for Cancer Patients Living with Dementia

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There is a growing recognition that the number of cancer patients also living with dementia is increasing. In 2016 it was estimated that 564,000 Canadians were living with dementia; this number is predicted to almost double by 2031.¹ And, while there have been declines in the incidence and mortality rates for some cancers, the number of Canadians diagnosed with dementia is also predicted to increase significantly in response to our growing aging population.

Recent studies have highlighted the inequity of outcomes experienced by cancer patients also living with dementia.² These patients are found to have a reduced likelihood of receiving cancer screening, staging, and curative treatment compared with patients without dementia.³ Research findings point to diagnosis with later stage cancers and lower survival rates. The difficult experiences of informal caregivers adds another layer of complexity related to overall health outcomes for this patient group.⁴ Meeting the care needs of cancer patients living with dementia also presents unique challenges to oncology clinicians and staff.

Additionally, cancer care centres are busy and often confusing environments that can be overwhelming for patients living with dementia.⁵ Thus, there is a need to better understand and subsequently improve the care experiences for this patient group – we propose a Dementia-Friendly approach to cancer care.

Research Questions:

1. What are the cancer care experiences of patients also living with dementia, their caregivers, and their health care providers (HCPs)?
2. What strategies and initiatives support a Dementia-Friendly care approach?
3. What is the impact of a Dementia-Friendly education module for HCPs?

Study Design:

Phase 1 – 2022-2024:
- Explore the experiences of patients, their caregivers, and HCPs.
- Develop and evaluate a Dementia Awareness education module tailored to meet the unique needs of BC Cancer care providers
- Create recommendations for practice

Participants:
- Cancer patients also living with dementia, N=10
- Patient Caregivers, N=10
- Health Care Providers (e.g., physicians, therapists, allied health professionals), N=20
- Nurses, N=15

References:


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