

## Abstract

The diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer induces fear and distress in the newly diagnosed patients. Women's coping responses early after diagnosis are related to their long term psychological adjustment. The purpose of this study was to compare the effect of an interactive psychoeducational program, a self-help booklet and the wait-list control group on various aspects of mental adjustment of the newly diagnosed breast cancer patients.

Newly diagnosed breast cancer patients with Stage I to Stage III breast cancer were randomly assigned to the computerized psychoeducation group receiving a brief psychoeducation session and a telephone follow-up by breast cancer survivors or to the self-help booklet group where they received a self-help booklet on cancer for take-home reference. They were assessed on their level of psychological distress using the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) and their coping responses were assessed using the Mini Mental Adjustment to Cancer Scale (Mini-MAC) before the first chemotherapy and before their second chemotherapy which was 6 weeks later.

Seventy eight newly diagnosed breast cancer patients agreed to participate and 54 of them complete both the baseline and follow-up assessments. Their data was also compared with the wait-list control group. All of the participants' anxiety rating reduced significantly after 6 weeks. However, only participants from the computerized psychoeducation group and the self-help booklet group showed a reduction in their depression rating and total distress score. Moreover, the reduction is significant only in the participants from the computerized psychoeducation group. For their coping responses, anxious preoccupation reduced by time while the other coping responses remained unchanged.

In general, breast cancer patients' anxiety ratings and anxious preoccupation reduced over time. Compared with a wait-list control group, the brief and early computerized psychoeducation program delivered by breast cancer survivors significantly improved newly diagnosed breast cancer patients' mental adjustment.