PROBLEM-SOLVING THERAPY FOR CANCER PATIENTS

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Abstract

Estimates of the prevalence of psychological difficulties, such as depression, anxiety, and poor quality of life, are high among individuals diagnosed with cancer. Problem-solving therapy (PST), a cognitive and behavioral intervention, is one major approach that has been applied and evaluated as a means of positively impacting on such problems. PST trains individuals in a series of skills that helps them cope more effectively with life stressors, such as those associated with cancer and its treatment. This paper provides a brief overview of the research supporting its efficacy, as well as clinical guidelines.

Key words: Problem-solving therapy, effectiveness of psychological treatments, cancer.

INTRODUCTION

Considerable medical progress has been made in treating the collective set of diseases known as cancer. Many types are curable and there has been a sustained decline in the overall death rate from cancer when one focuses on the impact on the total population. Because of such improvements in medical science, however, more people are living with cancer than ever before. Although the extensive medical needs of such patients may be well attended to, psychosocial and emotional needs are often overlooked. Almost every aspect of one’s life can be affected, as cancer creates many stressors and can negatively impact on a patient’s quality of life. Even for people who generally cope well with major negative life events, cancer and its treatment greatly increases the stressful nature of even routine daily tasks. Weisman and...