Assessing the feasibility and impact of a hospital-based psychosocial support: A one-year review of the psycho-oncology clinic

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ABSTRACT

Psychological distress remains a prevalent yet under-recognized issue in cancer care, often limited by the access to structured mental health services and overshadowed by the biomedical focus within the local hospital systems. The absence of psychological support contributes to reduced quality of life, treatment non-adherence, and poorer clinical outcomes among persons affected by cancer. The Psycho-Oncology Clinic was established to address this service gap. This study aimed to assess the feasibility of the clinic over its first year of operation at Hospital Kuala Lumpur. Feasibility was assessed across four domains: recruitment capability, retention rate, resource requirements, and outcome measures using the Distress Thermometer (DT) and Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10). A total of 135 patients were referred to the clinic, with 89 (65.9%) engaging in at least one session. Among them, only 7% discontinued the intervention prematurely, indicating good retention. The average wait time from referral to first session was 1.8 days. Services were delivered by a mental health team consisting of three clinical psychologists and two counselors, reflecting moderate resource use and efficient service coordination. Significant reductions in psychological distress were observed. DT scores decreased from a mean of 8.4 (SD=2.5) to 2.6 (SD=1.4), while K10 scores dropped from 38.4 (SD=3.9) to 14.7 (SD=2.3) post-intervention. Findings suggest that the Psycho-Oncology Clinic is feasible and effective within a hospital setting, supported by acceptable recruitment and retention rates, manageable resource requirements, and improved psychological outcomes. These results demonstrate the potential for sustainable psychosocial service integration in oncology care. Further longitudinal and cost-effectiveness studies are recommended to inform broader implementation and policy development.

Keywords: Psycho-oncology, healthcare integration, feasibility study, psychosocial support, patient care