

Te Whatu Ora

Health New Zealand

Capital, Coast and Hutt Valley

Meeting People Where They Are: psychosexual cancer support

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Abstract

Within our Cancer Support: Psychology and Social Work team we have social work and psychology roles which cover the whole gynae-oncology pathway, including post-treatment. This is a new way of working in this space.

As a broader multi-disciplinary team (MDT) we are striving to increase our focus on holistic healthcare, especially around psychosexual issues and equitable access to treatment.

Outcomes

- Increased awareness of psychosocial needs within MDT, leading to an increase in collaborative work (12% of referrals to the team are for gynaecological cancers)
- Data shows our priority groups, Māori and Pacific people, are accessing support at increasing rates:
 - Jan-July 2022, 36% of gynae-oncology referrals
 - 2021 31%
 - 2020, 26%

Addressing Health Inequities

- Sexuality, especially for those assigned female at birth, is an area that is often overlooked, particularly in the context of pleasure
- We increase access to treatment with advocacy, psychosocial and psychosexual support, and help with practical matters such as financial stress
- We work with a Māori Cancer Nurse Coordinator (CNC) to support patients, especially in the context of te ao Māori
- As an MDT, we are exploring how we can make gynae-oncology safer for those who do not identify as women

Implementation / Transition to Practice

- As an MDT, we have developed a guide about sex and gynaecological cancer with partner agencies. There is a focus on sexual pleasure, communication with partners, and many of the difficulties patients report. It can be viewed via Talk Peach at present whilst a downloadable guide is developed.
- We are developing further training and advice for clinicians so that they feel more confident to address psychosexual issues. This allows social workers and psychologists to focus on acute psychosocial and psychosexual issues.
- We are developing a new social work referral process for smooth transitions when patients attend from other localities for surgery.

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Ngā mihi nui

A decorative background pattern consisting of a dark blue field. The upper portion features a repeating geometric motif of concentric diamonds and zig-zags in a lighter blue color. The lower portion features a dense, vertical, fringed pattern of thin, light blue lines.