



Providing support to family caregivers of persons with co-occurring dementia and cancer in the Pacific island of Guam

Iain K. B. Twaddle, PhD, Jeanine M. Quinto, BA,
Maree Josephine Saloma, BA, Marie C. Benito, MA,
& Maxine Leon Guerrero

University of Guam, Mangilao, Guam

Contact: Iain Twaddle at psychology@triton.uog.edu

POSTER #4500

ISTAART
ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION
AAIC>26

INTRODUCTION

Patients presenting with a dual diagnosis of dementia and cancer face significant healthcare challenges due to the complexities of both conditions. On the one hand, dementia leads to poorer cancer outcomes as patients with dementia are less likely to receive cancer screening, diagnostic, and treatment services. At the same time, patients with dementia who do receive cancer treatment are often confused and overwhelmed by the diagnostic and treatment procedures they are required to undergo due to the cognitive impairments associated with dementia, leading to negative impacts on their quality of life. Thus, caring for patients with comorbid dementia and cancer can be a difficult undertaking. This poster presentation highlights the provision of support services for caregivers of persons living with both dementia and cancer through a cancer support program in the Pacific island of Guam called “Circle of Care Cancer Support and Psycho-Oncology Services.”

CHALLENGES FACED BY CAREGIVERS OF PERSONS WITH CO-OCCURRING DEMENTIA AND CANCER

Caregivers of persons with co-occurring dementia and cancer face several challenges:

- 1. Different health systems:** Caregivers have to navigate two different health systems—oncology and geriatrics—that usually function independently.
- 2. Exhaustion:** Caregivers face multiple responsibilities from managing medication and handling appointments to providing assistance with daily living.
- 3. Lack of support:** Many family caregivers feel isolated and overwhelmed by the challenges associated with providing patient care for two serious health issues.

SERVICES FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS OF CANCER PATIENTS WITH DEMENTIA

The Circle of Care program provides comprehensive support services for family caregivers of cancer patients with dementia including:

- 1. In-person and online cancer support groups for cancer patients and family caregivers;**
- 2. Health and wellness services for cancer patients and family caregivers including restorative yoga, art therapy, oncology nutrition, tai chi & qi gong, and water aerobics;**
- 3. A specialized support group for family caregivers of cancer patients;**
- 4. Individual counseling for cancer patients with dementia;**
- 5. Individual counseling for caregivers of cancer patients with dementia;**
- 6. Joint counseling sessions for cancer patients with dementia and their family caregiver;**
- 7. Outreach services including hospital and home visits.**

CONCLUSION

While family caregivers of persons with co-occurring dementia and cancer generally report benefiting from these services, outcomes for this population have nevertheless been mixed. In particular, the extraordinary pressures and demands faced by caregivers of persons with both dementia and cancer often make it difficult for them to access program services. In these cases, personalized hospital and home visits often replace participation in support group sessions.



Program Participants Attending Family Caregiver Conference



In-Person Cancer Support Group



Restorative Yoga



Program Participants