



# Narrative Therapy Effectiveness in Adult Patients Undergoing Chemotherapy Cancer treatment



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## ABSTRACT

It is very common for cancer patients to experience depression while undergoing treatment (Vega et al., 2014). Previous studies have tested the effectiveness of several types of therapeutic interventions for depression in cancer patients. However, few studies have focused on the use of narrative therapy in this population specifically. This study seeks to test the effectiveness of narrative therapy for cancer patients currently undergoing chemotherapy treatment using the PHQ-9 and White's maps of narrative therapy (Kroenke et al. 2001; 2007).

## INTRODUCTION

- The National Cancer Institute estimates that 15-25% of cancer patients experience depression.
- Researchers have found that using interventions such as manualized psychological treatments, non-manualized therapy, and coping skills trainings have been effective in lowering rates of depression, anxiety, or general distress in cancer patients (Buffart et al., 2020; Temple et al., 2020; Yusufov et al., 2020).

## PRIMARY AIM AND HYPOTHESES

- Is narrative therapy an effective tool for lowering depression in cancer patients currently undergoing chemotherapy?
- I hypothesize that narrative therapy will lower rates of depression in the experimental group as compared to the control group.

## METHODS

### Participants

This study will utilize a sample of 100 adult patients diagnosed with cancer who are currently undergoing chemotherapy. The participants must have already received one dose of chemotherapy and have at least one left. I will recruit patients from Swedish Cancer Institute through the oncology social work department.

### Procedures

Before participants begin their course of therapy, they will be assessed for their baseline depression level. Half of the group—50 participants—will then undergo eight weeks of in-person narrative therapy, in which the therapists will utilize White's two maps of narrative therapy (2007). The other 50 participants will make up the control group and receive no therapeutic contact. After nine weeks—during which time the experimental group will need to have completed their eight sessions—depression screenings will again be administered and compared to baseline.

The PHQ-9 will be used to measure the participants' depression. The researchers will clarify that the participants must answer the questions as they apply to depression symptoms only, not as they pertain to cancer or chemo side effects (e.g. lack of appetite that cannot be attributed to nausea). The total PHQ-9 score will be summed and recorded, and the scores pre-therapy and post-therapy will be compared.

## MEASURES

### Depression

Depression will be measured using the PHQ-9 (Kroenke & Spitzer, 2002).

## RESULTS

To find the results of this study, the researchers will compare the pre-therapy PHQ-9 results with the post-therapy PHQ-9 results in both the experimental and control groups. Results will be tested for significance using a t-test regression.

## Discussion

This research would be beneficial for clinical use, as it would indicate that narrative therapy is an effective tool for the treatment of depression in cancer patients. Further research should be done on this subject to increase the number of studies demonstrating the effectiveness of narrative therapy for this population.

Increased research on narrative therapy for cancer patients would open up the available treatment modalities for this population. This would expand the number of clinicians capable of treating cancer patients, as it would then include narrative therapists.