Meeting Psychosocial Needs of Cancer Patients through Integrated E-Health Intervention: A Theory-based Mediation Approach

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Abstract:

The goal of this investigation is to understand how the use of an interactive e-health intervention could facilitate positive psychosocial changes and how these changes in turn benefit quality of life in breast cancer patients. Two competing theoretical approaches--the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and competency theory--were put forward to carefully examine how an e-health intervention influences such psychosocial processes. Although both theories support the notion of intervening mechanisms when it comes down to intervention effects on patients' quality of life and well-being, they argue for different mediating processes. Therefore, this study systematically tests the two well-established yet competing theories with specific breast cancer populations. With hopes to technologically reinforce health benefits, two e-health intervention systems -- CHESS (Comprehensive Health Enhancement Support System) plus a human Mentor and the Internet-only control -- were scrutinized for its potential contributions. Findings indicated that the Self-Determination Theory (SDT)-based model had little explanatory power, while the competence theory-based model accounted for how the intervention effects and subsequent psychosocial processes operated among women with breast cancer. Study implications and suggestions for future research and practices are further discussed.