Feasibility and Preliminary Outcomes of a Psychoeducation Intervention for Caregivers of Children with Cancer Receiving Treatment: A Pilot Study

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BACKGROUND

• Negative psychological symptoms and poor health-related quality of life have been reported among the caregivers of children with cancer. 1,2  
• Psychoeducation interventions have been used to manage anxiety, depressive symptoms, and poor health-related quality of life among caregivers of children with cancer on treatment and have shown positive effects. 1,2  
• However, evidence of its effectiveness among Malawian caregivers is not well-documented. 3

STUDY OBJECTIVES

• To assess the feasibility and acceptability of the psychoeducation intervention among the caregivers of children with cancer receiving treatment  
• To evaluate its preliminary effectiveness on anxiety, depressive symptoms, coping, and health-related coping of life

METHODS

Study Design  
• Single-blind parallel randomised controlled trial at two paediatric cancer centres in Malawi.  
• Block randomization, assessor blinding, and sequentially numbered opaque envelopes were used.  

Sample size  
• 24 participants with 12 participants each group.

Outcomes  
• Anxiety, depressive symptoms, coping and health-related quality of life.  
• The feasibility of intervention: enrolment rate, attrition rate, and adherence to intervention.  
• Acceptability: Qualitative interviews with participants in the intervention group.

RESULTS

Feasibility of Intervention

• The enrolment rate was 92.3%, the attrition rate was 4%, and adherence to the intervention was 84%.

Table 1: Themes and Subthemes from the Qualitative Interviews

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<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
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| Benefits of the psychoeducation intervention | • Improved knowledge  
• Reduced stress  
• Networking and psychological support  
• Hope and Encouragement |
| Perceptions of the Intervention | • Satisfaction with the intervention  
• Adequacy of the intervention |
| Suggestions for Timing | • Intervention to be provided early in the diagnosis stage |

Table 2: Preliminary Outcomes of Psychoeducation Intervention

| Outcome Variables | Intervention Group (n=12, Mean ± SD) | Control Group (n=12, Mean ± SD) | t-statistics | p  
|-------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|---|
| Anxiety levels | Before intervention 5.85±3.78  
After intervention 3.25±1.44 | 8.92±2.91  
2.482 | 0.021*  
1.013 |
| Depressive symptoms | Before intervention 7.17±6.00  
After intervention 3.03±3.85 | 9.17±5.86  
2.245 | 0.035*  
0.917 |
| Health-related Quality of Life | Physical health components | Before intervention 50.24±8.97  
After intervention 55.68±8.16 | 55.52±8.09  
57.72±12.31 | 1.512  
-0.667 | 0.145  
0.512  
0.275 |
| Mental health components | Before intervention 22.31±5.20  
After intervention 22.51±4.76 | 20.23±4.53  
1.148 | 0.267  
0.043 |
| Coping | Problem-focused coping | Before intervention 22.50±2.87  
After intervention 24.00±3.81 | 22.58±2.97  
19.58±3.63 | 0.000  
-2.539 | 1.000  
0.939 |
| Emotion-focused coping | Before intervention 27.08±5.26  
After intervention 30.16±6.04 | 29.50±4.78  
30.41±6.46 | 1.178  
-0.805 | 0.252  
0.430  
0.328 |

CONCLUSION

• The study findings suggest that the psychoeducation intervention is a feasible, acceptable, and promising intervention for alleviating anxiety and depressive symptoms and improving coping among the caregivers of children with cancer.  
• Considering the limitations of a pilot study, a comprehensive trial with a large sample size is needed to establish conclusive evidence.

REFERENCES


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