Piloting an Automated Distress Management Program in an Oncology Practice

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Background: New administrative requirements to provide assessment and treatment for distress in patients with cancer, as well as concern for positive patient outcomes, highlight oncology practitioners’ need for a high-quality distress management program.

Objectives: Researchers designed, developed, implemented, and evaluated a nurse-led quality-improvement project that pilot tested a distress management program in an outpatient medical oncology practice.

Methods: The program used a tablet computer for data collection, immediate analysis, and recommendation display to provide individually tailored psychosocial coping recommendations, referrals, or both to nurses and patients.

Findings: Pre- and postprogram evaluations suggest that the program is feasible, safe, and effective for detecting and reducing distress in patients with cancer. In addition, tailoring psychosocial coping strategies to the patient’s emotional situation may have been key to the program’s effectiveness.

Key words: distress management; cancer; automated tailoring; tablet computer

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