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Psychological Care in Advanced Disease: The Global Revolution

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AIMS:

The revolution of palliative care has drawn attention to the importance of relieving physical and psychological suffering in patients with advanced disease. However, approaches to relieve psychological distress and to improve psychological well-being in this population are still much less systematized than those to relieve of pain and other physical symptoms. A global knowledge translation project is required for psychological care to become a standard of care for this population.

METHODS:

A number of psychological interventions have been shown to be effective to relieve depression and other symptoms in patients with advanced cancer, but none have become a standard of care. Managing Cancer and Living Meaningfully (CALM) is a brief, supportive-expressive therapy tailored for patients with advanced disease and integrated with cancer care and early palliative care. CALM has been evaluated in large randomized controlled trials in Canada and in Europe.

RESULTS:

CALM has been shown to relieve depression and death-related distress and to support death preparation in patients with advanced disease. A global project involving twenty countries has been launched to establish hubs and networks of CALM training and treatment delivery for this population.

CONCLUSIONS:

Robust evidence is now available to demonstrate the benefit of psychological interventions for patients with advanced disease. However, a global network is needed for such interventions to become part of routine care. The Global CALM project is a unique knowledge translation initiative for psychological care for patients with advanced disease to be delivered as part of routine cancer care and early palliative care.

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