

OBJECTIVES: The international literature refers frequently to the challenges of engaging male cancer patients in the psychosocial support services. The benefits of accessing psychosocial services are well documented, reportedly leading to improvements in mental health, less psychological distress and even prolonged survival. The allotment project is intended to provide a meaningful and engaging community based psychosocial service for men living with cancer. Allotment involves planning and maintaining a vegetable garden while providing peer and clinical support. **METHOD:** An Action-Based research strategy was adopted to design, implement and evaluate a project that would provide psychosocial support for men living with cancer. Participants gathered weekly, over a seven-month period, at the allotment. Here, they engaged in informal group support, over morning tea. This was followed by a mindfulness exercise, and work on the allotment. The evaluation of the project involved semi-structured interviews, measurements of anxiety, depression, and quality of life. **RESULTS:** Qualitative analysis has identified impacts of the intervention in a number of key areas, including feelings of peer support, willingness to discuss illness, feelings of worth and newfound enthusiasm for learning and development. Problems identified included feelings of uselessness, feeling a burden, low energy levels and feelings of isolation. Benefits of the intervention included the impact of social support, physical and existential benefits; a focus on learning and living with cancer; relaxation, perspective and acceptance. **CONCLUSIONS:** The action research model provided a framework to design, implement and evaluate a project that met the psychosocial needs of men living with cancer. Horticultural therapy and mindfulness, a combined intervention, merits consideration as a form of psychosocial intervention. Participation in an energetic and supportive work environment, combined with mindfulness activities can successfully shift patient's focus from illness to achievement and personal development due to increased social contact, increased feelings of importance, optimism and usefulness.

A-435

The Impact of Children's Illness Perceptions on Paediatric Cancer Patients' Quality of Life

Marta Fonseca¹, Pierre Missotten², Anne-Marie Etienne², Gilles Dupuis³, Fabienne Lemétayer¹, Elisabeth Spitz¹

Université Paul-Verlaine Metz, Équipe de Psychologie de la Santé, Metz, France¹, Université de Liège, Département de Personne et Société, Liège, Belgium², Université du Québec à Montréal, Département de Psychologie, Montréal (Québec), Canada³

OBJECTIVES: The study of children's illness perceptions has been widely developed over the last

decade (Chateaux, 2005). More recently research has focussed on the impact of illness perceptions on Quality of Life (QoL). The present communication aims to analyse the impact of illness perceptions of children with cancer on Generic and Modular QoL. Authors put forward the hypothesis that the several dimensions of children's illness perceptions may influence QoL in different ways. **METHOD:** The *Brief Illness Perception Questionnaire* (Broadbent *et al.*, 2006) and the *Quality of Life Systemic Inventory for Children - Module for Cancer* (Missotten *et al.*, 2008) were administered to 40 children with cancer, aged from 8 to 12 years, at a paediatric hospital. Specifically developed for children from these ages, the QoL measure is a self-assessment questionnaire that provides a general and a modular score (general domains of QoL and domains of QoL related with cancer). **RESULTS:** Multiple regressions highlighted that five dimensions of children's cancer perceptions are significant predictors of QoL, namely *illness consequences, identity, concerns, coherence and timeline*. The most predictable dimension of both general and modular QoL is cancer consequences: it explains 36% (Beta = 0.51; $p = 0.01$) of the general and 47% (Beta = 0.70; $p = 0.01$) of the modular QoL variance. Children reporting a less threatening view about the consequences of cancer in their lives reveal a better QoL. **CONCLUSIONS:** The framework of the present study has its fundamentals on recent literature developments by presenting a modular approach to QoL assessment. Results revealed that illness perceptions of children with cancer play an important role both on general QoL and QoL more directly related with cancer and treatments. Through the analysis of the influence of cancer perceptions on QoL, findings provide information to design intervention to promote QoL among paediatric cancer patients.

A-439

Innovative Ways to Inform Women About Breast Health & Breast Cancer: The Successes of Bridges to Better Breast Health Project

Carole Mayer, Val Allison, Shari Brown, Denise Gauthier-Frohlick, Carolyn Jackson, Crystal Larose, Lisa Lepage, Leigh MacEwan, Maureen McMillan, Irene Nicoll, Jami van Haften

Regional Cancer Program, Hoptial regional de Sudbury Regional Hospital, Sudbury, Ontario, Canada

OBJECTIVES: Educating women about breast health and supporting the information needs of women diagnosed with breast cancer can be challenging when a population of 600,000 people is spread across 310,000 kilometres. We will illustrate through this presentation some of the