

A Safety-Net-Based Cancer Support Group for Patients and Survivors, with Adaptation to a Virtual Environment

Evelin Trejo¹, Roxanne Lima², Miriam Perales¹, Tahnee Gantt², Barbara Cicarelli², Niharika Dixit¹, Ana I. Velazquez¹

¹University of California San Francisco, San Francisco, California, USA. ²Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center, San Francisco, California, USA.

Introduction

Cancer Awareness, Resources and Education (CARE) Program:

- Established 2002 at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center (ZSFG)
- Community-driven education and support program that empowers and uplifts medically underserved patients and their families to manage the cancer experience
- Serves over 2,000 ZSFG patients
 - Low Income
 - Ethnically Diverse Patients
- Provides cancer patients with self-care, coping skills, education, and support to help navigate the overwhelming medical and emotional terrain inherent in cancer diagnosis
- Latino cancer patients/survivors (CPS) are known to experience significantly higher levels of distress and lower quality of life compared to non-Latino whites.
- Social support resources are limited in availability and uptake among non-English speaking CPS due to language, economic, and socio-cultural barriers.
- The COVID-19 pandemic caused CARE to transition into a remote audio/video (Zoom) platform.
- Our goal was to evaluate the sustainability of Spanish CARE for Latino CPS participants despite going remote (Zoom platform).**

Methods

- Tracked the amount of time needed to train each participant to be able to utilize Zoom
 - from 2020 to 2023
- Took attendance for each session (Fall, Spring, and Summer)
 - 40 participants
- Written (mailed) or phone survey evaluations:
 - Assessing the satisfaction of each Zoom session
 - Considering usability and easy access to Zoom for patients with low technology literacy
 - Evaluating worryment and concerns
 - Identifying needs that were not being met

Results

	Attendance per class in each Session									
	Fall 2020	Spring 2021	Summer 2021	Fall 2021	Spring 2022	Summer 2022	Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Summer 2023	Fall 2023
Class 1	11	17	8	7	10	12	19	19	18	17
Class 2	7	12	6	8	8	10	17	18	13	19
Class 3	11	13	5	9	14	11	16	16	19	21
Class 4	9	12	7	NA	16	11	14	17	15	NA
Class 5	13	12	6	NA	12	18	16	13	9	NA
Class 6	10	11	NA	NA	NA	NA	15	12	24	NA
Attended one class per session	21 (52.5%)	25 (62.5%)	15 (37.5%)	16 (40%)	29 (72.5%)	25 (62.5%)	24 (60%)	24 (60%)	32 (80%)	29 (72.5%)

Figure 1. Attendance of Zoom sessions N=40. About six classes were held in each session. Total of 3 sessions (18 classes) per year.

"I felt lonely and sick, but when I joined the CARE group, I found strength in meeting people in the same or worse situation than mine. Sharing my feelings was the best thing ever!"

PATIENT'S WORRIMENTS/CONCERNS

- Feelings of Isolation/Depression
- Food Assistance
- Health Insurance Issues
- Trouble Getting Medication
- Lost Job/Lack of work
- Financial Issues
- Appointment Issues
- Other

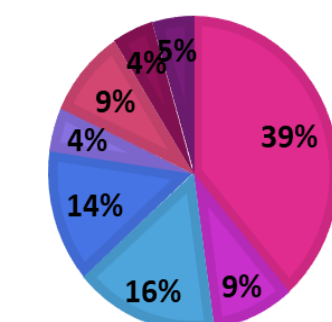


Figure 2. Patient's worryment and concerns. Survey questions asked obstacles, worryment, and concerns they were facing during the pandemic. Above is a quote from a patient that addresses their feelings of isolation and depression.

HAVE YOU USED ZOOM IN THE PAST ?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

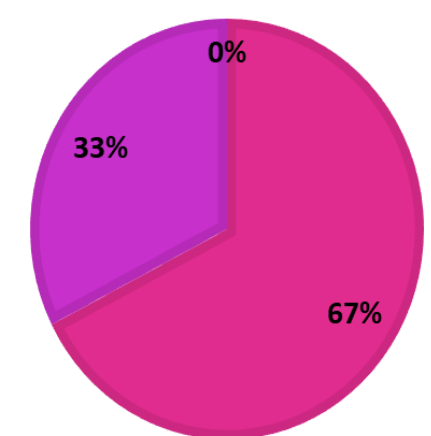


Figure 3. Have you used Zoom in the past? Evaluating the experience of having used Zoom

WHAT TYPE OF DEVICE DID YOU USE TO JOIN CARE VIA ZOOM?

- Telephone
- Tablet
- Laptop
- Computer
- Smart phone
- Other

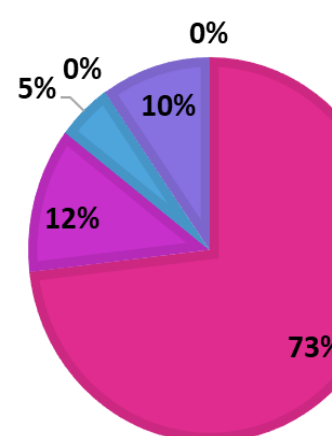


Figure 4. Device used to join CARE via Zoom

DID YOU NEED HELP TO ENTER THE ZOOM CARE SESSION

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

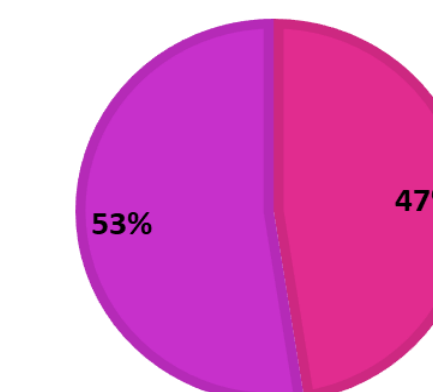


Figure 5. Assistance in needing help to join Zoom CARE. Evaluating the difficulty in joining Zoom after Zoom Training.

"Thank you, as this communication encourages those of us who are confined to our homes for fear of becoming infected with COVID."

Figure 6. Patient Quote derived from open-ended questions from ZOOM satisfaction survey.

- Of 40 Latino CPS surveyed, 39% of experienced feelings of isolation and depression.
- Participants who attended more than twice in a session grew by 53.3% between 2020 and 2023.
- Overall Zoom attendance increased
 - Initial 17.5% in 2020
 - 70.8% in 2023
- Zoom Training
 - Each participant needed 76.33 minutes (1.27 hours) on average
- Zoom Challenges
 - 47% needed help entering the meetings
 - 67% had never used Zoom before
 - 50% of patients had trouble connecting
 - 50% did not have internet/Wi-Fi
- Devices used to connect to Zoom
 - 73% used a telephone
 - Not a smartphone
 - 10% used landline phone
 - 20% shared phone
- 35% of patients preferred to meet over Zoom every week
- 20% would prefer to meet every other week



Discussion

- Spanish CARE provides cultural- and language-concordant emotional and social support to Latino CPS despite turning into a Zoom platform.
- Currently, Spanish CARE is running on a hybrid platform:
 - In-person session once a month
 - Check-ins and informational classes are held via Zoom 2-3 times per month
- Implementation Success
 - Training must be conducted especially for a population with low technology literacy
 - Access to internet/Wi-Fi
 - Having access to a personal telephone or device to connect to Zoom
 - Increase in attendance demonstrates participants wanting to continue to nourish the community they built despite not being able to see each other in person.

References

- Campbell HS, Phaneuf MR, Deane K (2004) Cancer peer support programs—do they work? *Patient Educ Couns* 55(1):3–15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pec.2003.10.001>
- Holtz, B. E., Mitchell, K. M., Strand, D., & Hirko, K. (2024). Perceptions of Telehealth-Based Cancer Support Groups at a Rural Community Oncology Program. *Journal of cancer education: the official journal of the American Association for Cancer Education*, 10.1007/s13187-024-02428-7. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13187-024-02428-7>
- Lee, K. A., Ma, W., Sikavi, D. R., Drew, D. A., Nguyen, L. H., Bowyer, R. C. E., Cardoso, M. J., Fall, T., Freidin, M. B., Gomez, M., Graham, M., Guo, C. G., Joshi, A. D., Kwon, S., Lo, C. H., Lochlainn, M. N., Menni, C., Murray, B., Mehta, R., Song, M., ... COPE consortium (2021). Cancer and Risk of COVID-19 Through a General Community Survey. *The oncologist*, 26(1), e182–e185. <https://doi.org/10.1634/theoncologist.2020-0572>
- Otto, A. K., Prinsloo, S., Natori, A., Wagner, R. W., Gomez, T. I., Ochoa, J. M., Tworoger, S. S., Ulrich, C. M., Ahmed, S., McQuade, J. L., Peoples, A. R., Antoni, M. H., Bower, J. E., Cohen, L., & Penedo, F. J. (2024). Impact of COVID-19-related experiences on health-related quality of life in cancer survivors in the United States. *PLoS one*, 19(3), e0297077. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0297077>
- Priya Nambisan, Information seeking and social support in online health communities: impact on patients' perceived empathy, *Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association*, Volume 18, Issue 3, May 2011, Pages 298–304, <https://doi.org/10.1136/amiajnl-2010-000058>