

## Sigma's 30th International Nursing Research Congress

### Why Don't Cancer Survivors Attend Cancer Support Groups? A Pilot Study

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**Purpose:** Cancer is the leading cause of death for both men and women in Canada. Professionally or nonprofessionally led support groups have been recognized as a significant source of psychosocial support for cancer survivors. However, the participation rate was low and reasons for leaving a support group were not explored fully. Therefore, our purpose of this study was to explore the reasons why Chinese cancer survivors left or did not attend a cancer support group in Toronto.

**Methods:** In-depth individual qualitative interviews were conducted. Five Chinese cancer survivors participated in in-depth interviews. Colaizzi's phenomenological method was used to analyze the interview data. After obtaining ethics approval from York University's Research Ethics Committee, participants not attending a cancer support group were recruited through an outreach worker at South Riverdale Community Healthcare Centre (SRCHC). Eligibility inclusion criteria include adult cancer survivors whose age was 20 years or more, who can read and speak English or Mandarin, who approached the outreach worker for cancer support group information between 2012 and 2014, but not attend the support group or attended only once or twice. Potential participants were contacted by the outreach worker, who described the study to the participants and emphasized that participation would be confidential, and privacy would be secured. They were informed of their right to disengage from the study at any time without risk. Participants who agreed to join the study signed a consent form and completed a questionnaire on demographic data at the time of the interview. Interviews were conducted by the first author and were carried out at times convenient to participants. Five participants were voluntarily to participate in in-depth interviews. The interview setting was the participants' home, or a location chosen by the participants for their comfort and safety. Interviews lasted from 60 to 90 minutes and were transcribed verbatim by a research assistant after removing all identifying information. To preserve the anonymity of the participants, we have limited the provision of demographic data, and participants are identified by a number.

**Results:** Four themes were extracted from the in-depth interviews: "not fit in", "not satisfied with the information provided", "tried to be a normal person", and "lack reliable transportation and convenient scheduling".

**Conclusion:** Cancer support groups can improve cancer survivors' physical and psychosocial outcomes. The services can also help cancer survivors to obtain health related information and connect with professionals and peers. In recognizing the reasons why cancer survivors left support groups, health-care providers need to evaluate and be aware of the needs and difficulties for cancer survivors to attend support groups. They should match cancer survivors with appropriate groups. More language-friendly groups need to be launched, so cancer patients can easily find a suitable one from their neighborhood.

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**Title:**

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**Keywords:**

Attendance, Cancer support group and Qualitative study

**References:**

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### **Abstract Summary:**

Professionally or nonprofessionally led support groups have been recognized as a significant source of psychosocial support for cancer survivors. Participants will learn the reasons why Chinese cancer survivors left or did not attend a cancer support group in Toronto.

### **Content Outline:**

#### **I. Introduction:**

A. Cancer is the leading cause of death for both men and women in Canada. Nearly 50% of Canadians is expected to be diagnosed with cancer at some point during their lifetime. Professionally or nonprofessionally led support groups have been recognized as a significant source of psychosocial support for cancer survivors.

B. Being volunteers in a cancer support group at a community healthcare centre in Toronto for years, we find that some of our members disappeared after one or two group meetings and were reluctantly to rejoin the group. Therefore, we proposed this project to explore the reasons why Chinese cancer survivors left or did not attend a cancer support group in Toronto.

## **II. Body:**

A. In-depth individual qualitative interviews were conducted from January to May 2016. A semi-structured guide (available upon request) posed questions to initiate conversations about participants' experiences of not attending a cancer support group.

B. Five participants were voluntarily to participate in in-depth interviews. The interview setting was the participants' home, or a location chosen by the participants for their comfort and safety. Interviews lasted from 60 to 90 minutes and were transcribed verbatim by a research assistant after removing all identifying information.

C. Data analysis began as soon as the interview was transcribed. The transcripts were analyzed using Colaizzi's [16] phenomenological method. All interviews were read by the authors independently to develop an overall understanding of the reasons why people do not attend a support group. Each transcript was analyzed individually. Significant statements were identified and coded. Coded data were grouped and transformed into themes, which provide the essential structure of the description.

D. Four themes were extracted from the in-depth interviews: "not fit in", "not satisfied with the information provided", "tried to be a normal person", and "lack reliable transportation and convenient scheduling".

## **III. Conclusion:**

Cancer support groups can improve cancer survivors' physical and psychosocial outcomes. The services can also help cancer survivors to obtain health related information and connect with professionals and peers. In recognizing the reasons why cancer survivors left support groups, health-care providers need to evaluate and be aware of the needs and difficulties for cancer survivors to attend support groups. They should match cancer survivors with appropriate groups. More language-friendly groups need to be launched, so cancer patients can easily find a suitable one from their neighborhood.

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