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Enhancing Cancer Care of Rural Dwellers Through Telehealth and Engagement (ENCORE) – CTS program arm (ENCORE Website)

Significance: Rural regions in the Southern US have disproportionately high cancer mortality rates with lung, colorectal, prostate, breast, and cervical cancer, strongly associated with higher socioeconomic deprivation levels. Tennessee is located at the center of these disparities with rural dwellers encompassing about one-third of the states' populations. Through a multi-level remote intervention, the Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center seeks to improve comprehensive cancer care delivery to patients residing in rural communities with persistent poverty.

Methods: The Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) is an evidence-based self-management intervention with demonstrated efficacy across numerous chronic health conditions. The CDSMP adaptation for cancer patients, Cancer Thriving and Surviving (CTS), has demonstrated efficacy in improving patient-provider communication, energy, and sleep and reducing depression and stress-related problems. Access to such programs is limited in rural communities with wide geographic areas; therefore, evaluation of the effectiveness of the evidence-based CTS intervention delivered through telehealth among rural patients is needed. The goal of this practicum project was to create a web-based collection of similar content material that serves as the control arm in the study where participants are randomized to CTS/online education. Further the goal of developing the online education can serve as a paradigm for patient education material that can be more widely used outside of research.

Outcome: Encorestudy.com was developed and contains the patient level (in layman language) trainings and instructions on a variety of subjects for cancer survivors. The training materials are categorized in ten subsets: overview of self-management, using your mind/relaxation/depression, fatigue management/good night sleep, addressing cancer related challenges, physical activity and exercise, pain management, cancer and changes to your body, Healthy eating and weight management, communication skills and relationships, making treatment decisions. The content of each category was extracted from available standard resources for patient training (e.g. National Cancer Institute, Canadian Cancer Society, etc).

Conclusion: Cancer survivors in the target regions will now be able to use the website. For 2 years, patients will be followed to solicit feedback.