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The efficacy of a mind-body-spirit group for women with breast cancer: a randomized controlled trial

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Abstract

Increasing numbers of women with breast cancer are seeking alternatives to standard group support in coping with their illness. This study examines outcomes for 181 women with breast cancer randomized to either a 12-week standard group support or a 12-week complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) support intervention. Participants in the CAM group were taught the use of meditation, affirmation, imagery and ritual. The standard group combined cognitive-behavioral approaches with group sharing and support. Both interventions were found to be associated with improved quality of life (CAM, $P=0.008$; Standard, $P=0.006$), decreased depression (CAM, $P=0.004$; Standard, $P=0.02$), decreased anxiety (CAM, $P=0.0003$; Standard, $P=0.02$) and increased "spiritual well-being" (CAM, $P=0.002$; Standard, $P=0.003$). Only the CAM group showed increases in measures of Spiritual Integration ($P=0.001$) which were also

showed increases in measures of spiritual integration ($r = 0.001$) which were also significant between groups ($P = 0.003$). The Standard group was associated with decreased confusion ($P = 0.01$) and decreased helplessness/hopelessness ($P = 0.01$), while the CAM group was associated with decreased avoidance ($P = 0.01$). None of these latter changes were significant between groups. At baseline, very high correlations were noted between measures of quality of life, mood, and spiritual integration. At the end of the intervention, the CAM group showed higher satisfaction ($P = 0.006$) and fewer dropouts ($P = 0.006$) compared to the standard group. Better outcomes in quality of life in the CAM group were associated with lower initial fighting spirit ($r = \hat{.}39, P = 0.001$). No baseline factors predicted better outcomes in the Standard group. In summary, the study found equivalence on most psychosocial outcomes between the two interventions.



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Keywords

Breast cancer support; Complementary and alternative medicine; Spirituality; Group therapy

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