

MEDICAL NEWS TODAY

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Transcendental Meditation Reduces Stress, Improves Mental Health Among Women With Breast Cancer

Women with breast cancer reduced stress and improved their mental health and emotional well being through the Transcendental Meditation technique, according to a new study published in the of the peer-reviewed *Integrative Cancer Therapies* (Vol. 8, No. 3: September 2009).

“A Randomized Controlled Trial of the Effects of Transcendental Meditation on Quality of Life in Older Breast Cancer Patients” was a collaboration between the Center for Healthy Aging at Saint Joseph Hospital; the Institute for Health Services, Research and Policy Studies at Northwestern University; the Department of Psychology at Indiana State University; and the Institute for Natural Medicine and Prevention at Maharishi University of Management.

“It is wonderful that physicians now have a range of interventions to use, including Transcendental Meditation, to benefit their patients with cancer,” said Rhoda Pomerantz, M.D., study co-author and chief of gerontology, Saint Joseph Hospital. “I believe this approach should be appreciated and utilized more widely.”

One hundred thirty women with breast cancer, 55 years and older, participated in the two-year study at Saint Joseph Hospital. The women were randomly assigned to either the Transcendental Meditation technique or to a usual care control group. Patients were administered quality of life measures, including the Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy-Breast (FACT-B), every six months for two years. The average intervention period was 18 months.

Stress contributes to the onset and progression of breast cancer

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women - striking about 13% of women. Women over the age of 50 have four times the incidence of breast cancer compared to women below 50. Breast cancer remains a leading cause of death among women, according to the National Cancer Institute.

“Emotional and psychosocial stress contribute to the onset and progression of breast cancer and cancer mortality,” said Sanford Nidich, lead author of the study and senior researcher at the Institute for Natural Medicine and Prevention at Maharishi University of Management.

“The Transcendental Meditation technique reduces stress and improves emotional well-being and mental health in older breast cancer patients. The women in the study found their meditation practice easy to do at home and reported significant benefits in their overall quality of life,” Dr. Nidich said.

“Decades of research have shown that stress contributes to the cause and complications of cancer,” said Robert Schneider, M.D., F.A.C.C., co-author and director of Institute for Natural Medicine and Prevention at Maharishi University of Management. “The data from this well-designed clinical trial and related studies suggest that effective stress reduction with the Transcendental Meditation program may be useful in the prevention and treatment and of breast cancer and its deleterious consequences.”

Research Funding

The study was supported by grants from the Retirement Research Foundation of Chicago and the National Institutes of Health National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine.

Facts on Breast Cancer

- Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women - and remains a leading cause of death.
- Breast cancer incidence in the United States is 1 in 8 (about 13%).
- In 2008, an estimated 250,000 new cases of breast cancer were diagnosed in women in the U.S.
- Women above the age of 50 have nearly four times the incidence compared to women under 50
- Newly diagnosed and long-term survivors are affected by impairment in quality of life (QOL), including emotional, physical, functional, social, and spiritual domains.
- Psychosocial stress contributes to the onset, progression, and mortality from this disease.
- Clinical diagnosis of breast cancer increases psychological distress, with sustained distress occurring during cancer treatment and continuing long-term.
- There have been an increasing number of women using complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) for female-specific cancers. In terms of breast cancer, recent studies indicate that CAM use among women may be as high as 90 percent.

Source:

Susan E. White

Saint Joseph Hospital