

PSYCHOSOCIAL STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER

July 2020

About the Study Group

The Psychosocial Study Group (SG) will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2022. Our SG has 151 members from 27 countries, representing 14% of MASCC's membership. It is one of the largest of MASCC's SGs, which underscores the importance of psychosocial care to supportive care in cancer. The aim of the SG is to make the psychosocial dimensions of care, including appropriate assessment and interventions, an integral part of routine cancer care for all patients.



Catherine Benedict, PhD
Clinical Assistant Professor
Stanford University School of Medicine

From the Editor

This newsletter is intended to bring the Psychosocial Study Group together to share news about research and accomplishments, find colleagues and collaborators with shared interests, and to be a platform for connecting with a community that is dedicated to the psychosocial aspects of cancer survivorship care.

In this issue, we are excited to welcome our new chair and vice chair. We also share information about resources as we continue to face cancer and COVID, along with other cancer-related resources to refer to as providers and for patients. Finally, take note of updates about the MASCC annual conference, which we will be looking forward to in 2021.

From the Chair

As I write these words, during my first time as a Study Group Chair, I am reflecting on how fast the world around us is changing and how, in these crazy times, psychosocial wellbeing is more important than ever.

I am delighted to be given the opportunity to represent you as Chair of the Psychosocial Study Group. I look forward to working with Dr. Bethany Rhoten, the new vice-chair. One of top priorities is in ensuring that psychosocial care and support are integral part of supportive care in cancer.

I know I have big shoes to fill in replacing Dr Lidia Schapira whose steady guidance of this group has been exemplary. But I know that with your help, I can do it. So please, drop me a line and share your ideas on how we can take advantage of our collective knowledge and skills in psychosocial oncology. You can reach me on bogda.koczwara@flinders.edu.au



One of my first tasks as - Chair was responding to the request from the MASCC Newsletter Editor, Angela Perez, to share some information with the MASCC membership about the Psychosocial Study Group. I took the opportunity to highlight some potential directions for the group to explore and I would value your input. Please find the transcript below.

*“With so little to be sure of
If there's anything at all
I'm sure of here and now and us together”*
-Steven Sondheim

As I write these words, there are 3 million cases of COVID-19 infections around the world and every MASCC member has been directly or indirectly affected by the pandemic. Labs have closed, elective surgical lists were stopped, and work from home began as did home schooling of children. Cancer work never really stops, not even in the time of the pandemic and it evolves rapidly. The pandemic has presented us, cancer clinicians and researchers, with urgent and significant challenges and many questions – *“Who do we treat? How do we deliver care safely? Whose treatment is no longer safe? What research can continue and how?”*

You might wonder what a profile of the MASCC Psychosocial Study Group has to do with COVID-19.

Everything.

We are one of the largest study groups with over 150 members from 27 countries. The group aims to involve and support members with interest in psychosocial oncology. We are a resource to MASCC with respect to psychosocial issues and promote sharing of related best practices research and practice information during the MASCC annual meeting. While the details of our recent work is available on our website <https://www.mascc.org/psychosocial>, a short summary is that our group focuses on the complex interface between cancer care and “all the other stuff” relevant to patients and to the health care providers and researchers.

The reality of the pandemic was brought home to me when, as a cancer clinician, a patient phoned to ask if I was still seeing patients. In this case, as with many cancer patients, the pandemic poses not only the threat of serious infection (something patients are very familiar with) but also a fear of abandonment by their cancer care team. They are concerned they are now a lower priority or higher risk in the context of the pandemic. They share a common reality of separation from many social support systems that sustain them on the daily basis.

How many of you have implemented the policy of “no visitors or accompanying persons during chemotherapy?” How many of you were forced to deliver bad news via phone? How many are grappling with how to assist patients who have become unemployed overnight and are facing financial crises? And all this while we are attending endless Zoom meetings while our children interrupt. And for those of us who have not fallen ill, we are the lucky ones.

Some of you might have been sick already. Some have lost a family member or a friend to the disease. Some grieve for the patient or colleague who died. Depending where you are in your “COVID-19 Parallel Universe,” you may be numb with grief, or

exhausted by uncertainty, or perhaps just a little hopeful for the future. Or all of the above.

Victor Frankl said, “Those who have a ‘why’ to live, can bear almost any ‘how’.” So, to cope, I often revert to my purpose. The pandemic has taught us some very tough lessons – it has shown us that change can happen overnight and cannot be controlled; that we live in a global world that is tightly interconnected; that health and economy are interrelated but you cannot fix the latter without fixing the former; that we are – as members of MASCC, of various study groups, as patients, health care providers, researchers – all in this together.

There is lots to do. We need to support patients and support each other. We need to develop (and study) new means of care delivery. The pandemic certainly opened the doors for digital health. But we should not see technology as a quick bandaid for everything. Not every patient has required digital health literacy. So, when your mind is wandering at your next Zoom meeting, think about what there is for you to do when the pandemic is over.

In this time of the pandemic, we can start by recognizing that our global community is a source of support, meaning, and inspiration. And the Psychosocial Study Group – and all of the MASCC study groups - should share ideas and pose questions that relate to the challenges of our new reality and solve them collectively.

As I look at the opportunities ahead, I see three broad directions for the group that come under one common theme of connection. First, we have a chance to take a global view of cancer psychosocial care and recognize not just challenges but also lessons that come from different settings across the globe. Second, we should consider the relationship between the care we deliver to others and the care we require for ourselves to be able to care for others. Last, we must acknowledge the significant role that patients play in how we deliver care and conduct research and support it. In clinical care, this means supporting self-management. In research and policy development, this includes engaging with consumer advocates. Both concepts are operationalized differently across the globe. MASCC, as an international group, offers the unique opportunity to connect these diverse experiences in one place.

Psychosocial wellbeing is defined as a state when individuals and/or communities have cognitive, emotional, and spiritual strengths combined with positive social relationships. Let the pandemic help us find the connections to build these strengths and relationships across the global MASCC Community and let the Psychosocial Study Group be the driving force to support it.

Feel free to contact me on bogda.koczwara@flinders.edu.au to share your ideas on how the group can advance the MASCC mission.

Bogda Koczwara AM BM BS FRACP MBioethics FAICD

Senior Staff Specialist, Department of Medical Oncology, Flinders Medical Centre
National Breast Cancer Foundation Practitioner Fellow

Meet the Study Group Vice Chair!

Hi everyone! My name is Bethany Rhoten, and I am excited to serve as co-chair for the Psychosocial Study Group. I'm a nurse scientist and assistant professor at Vanderbilt University School of Nursing in Nashville, TN, USA, where I conduct research, mentor PhD students, and educate advanced practice nurses. My research focuses on the psychosocial aspects of the cancer experience, primarily in regard to body image and sexuality concerns. I enjoyed presenting, "Body Image and Sexuality Research in Head and Neck Cancer," at last year's MASCC Annual Meeting in San Francisco.



My current work is focused on developing a web-based program to increase coping skills around body image and sexuality concerns after treatment for head and neck cancer and is funded by the Vanderbilt Institute for Clinical and Translational Research. I also utilize my expertise in psychosocial content and qualitative methodology as co-investigator or consultant on a variety of studies addressing acute and chronic medical conditions. I am particularly excited to bring my enthusiasm and expertise in these areas to the Psychosocial Study Group. I look forward to working with the group to examine pertinent psychosocial issues for collaboration, future research, and above all, to improve the lives of patients with cancer!

Bethany Rhoten, PhD, RN

Assistant Professor
Vanderbilt University School of Nursing

Farewell from Our Former Chair

I am thrilled to pass the leadership baton of the Psychosocial Study group to Bogda Koczwara and Bethany Rosen, and also to take this opportunity to thank Catherine Benedict for taking on the editorial role for our group's newsletter.

Being part of a MASCC study group presents opportunities I have not found in other professional societies. MASCC is not only multinational but truly interdisciplinary. This provides an international and intellectual energy that is unique and exciting. To my "village" of clinicians, advocates, and researchers interested in the human side of cancer, I would like to express my gratitude for your support and collegiality. I am confident that Bogda and Bethany will guide us well and help us see opportunities for strengthening our work through partnerships in research and mentorship.

It's been fun and inspiring. Cheers to our new leaders and I look forward to our next reunion in Spain next Spring.

Lidia Schapira, MD, FASCO

Associate Professor of Medicine
Director Cancer Survivorship Program
Stanford University School of Medicine



COVID-19 and Cancer

It goes without saying that COVID-19 has changed the lives of so many of us around the world in so many ways, with both short and potentially long-term impacts. As we struggle to cope with and adapt to these changes, personally and professionally, we hope this group may be one way to connect and find community.



MASCC Coronavirus Resources

To aid our members during this difficult and uncertain time, MASCC is sharing links to COVID-19 related information, including that related to management of oncology patients. Our website will be updated as new resources are released or shared with us.

MASCC COVID-19 Resources: <https://www.mascc.org/covid-19-resources>

These information sources related to COVID-19 are intended to guide members to information most useful to them.

Categories include:

- Information from Groups with an Oncology Focus
- General Information for Healthcare Professionals
- Scientific Journal Publisher Collections

If you have a suggestion of a great resource or a gap in resources that needs addressing, please let us know!

Additional resources that might be helpful...

For Patients: Work After Cancer

The **Work after Cancer website** is a resource to support work during and after cancer diagnosis, providing advice to people diagnosed with cancer, their loved ones, clinicians, and employers about their options, rights, and responsibilities.

Access the website here: <http://workaftercancer.com.au/welcome/>



Person diagnosed with cancer / carer / family member



Health care professional



Employer

Provider Trainings

Health After Cancer: A New Online Course

From our colleagues at Stanford, **Health After Cancer** is a new online course that presents basic principles of cancer survivorship to primary care physicians. Developed by a team of experts in caring for cancer survivors and narrated by a primary care physician, this course provides practical tips and tools that can be easily integrated into medical practice. This course raises awareness of the complex physical and psychosocial needs and concerns of the growing number of cancer survivors, and highlights the key role of primary care physicians in guiding them back to health, after cancer. Materials include story-based videos for each case, printable reference guides for clinical care, communication, and resources, as well as additional optional cases for extended learning.



This is a self-paced online course that is:

- Free
- Takes approximately 90 minutes to complete
- Available for CME credit through the Stanford Center for Continuing Medical Education

Health After Cancer

Current Status	Price	Get Started
NOT ENROLLED	Free	Login to Enroll

Check out a trailer here:

<https://digitalmedic.yuja.com/V/Video?v=956597&node=3838275&a=1653748950&autoplay=1>

Or the course site can be accessed here:

<https://mededucation.stanford.edu/courses/health-after-cancer/>

Cancer Coaching Certificate

The **Cancer Coaching Certificate** is a 47-hour certificate developed for local and international health professionals who want to help clients effectively self-manage care, across phases in the cancer continuum. Participation in this program will help you develop skills as a cancer self-management coach to effectively engage and motivate cancer populations to apply healthy behaviors for health recovery.



**Doris Howell R.N.
Ph.D., FAAN**

Program Director of the Cancer Coaching Certificate at York University/Senior Scientist, Supportive Care, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre Research Institute

What you will learn:

- Apply cancer health coaching skills to support patient self-management, and healthy behaviours to improve disease outcomes and recovery.
- Deliver motivational interviewing, decision balance, 5As counselling processes, and comprehensive whole person assessment.
- Collaborate with inter-professional health teams to support self-management for rapid, episodic cancer care.
- Support self-management during acute treatment and longer term survivorship.
- Prepare self-management and health recovery plans based on client assessments.
- Practice and validate your new skills through live simulation practice with patient actors in small groups, and in one-on-one skills assessment at the end of the program.

Registration deadline: July 20, 2020

Course Fee: CAD\$3,955 all taxes included.

To register: hlln@yorku.ca or call +1 416.736.2100 x22170

hlln.info.yorku.ca/cancer-coaching-summer-institute/



Looking forward to Spain in 2021!

As you all know by now, the 2020 MASCC/ISOO Annual Meeting has been postponed to **24-26 June 2021** in the same location - Seville, Spain. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, MASCC considered the health and safety of attendees, as well as the border closures and travel restrictions that are currently in place. [Click here for more details.](#)

The 2021 meeting was originally planned for Yokohama, Japan, as a joint meeting with the Japanese Association of Supportive Care in Cancer (JASCC). This meeting will be held in Japan in another year. The 2022 meeting is still planned for Toronto.

2021 Meeting Themes:

- Bioethics
- Cardio-oncology
- Models of Supportive Care
- Digital Health
- Cancer Survivorship

All deadlines are still waiting to be announced. Stay tuned.

Do you have news to share?

Do you want to be featured in the next Newsletter?

We are looking stories of achievement, interested papers, and profiles of individuals who are remarkable for their contribution to care, research, education, and mentoring in the area of psychosocial care in cancer. If you have an idea to share, please let us know.

We would love to spotlight your work and accomplishments!

Please email me at cbenedict@stanford.edu with any suggestions and recommendations. Self-promotion is encouraged.