**Title**

Tackling the consequences of cancer treatment; engaging community support networks

**Author and affiliations**

Grant M1

1 VCCC Palliative Medicine Research Group, St Vincent’s Hospital Melbourne, VIC, Australia

**Background**

One million Australian’s live with cancer or cancer survivorship. Providing medical care and support for cancer extends beyond the formal health system, as many patients access adjuvant therapies, sources of information and support networks.

Formalised support groups are a well-researched entity in cancer care and survivorship, and can provide emotional, education and social benefit for those involved, yet have limited uptake. Informal community networks are vast, and may fulfil many of these roles whilst being adaptive to the needs of the individual. Recent research demonstrates engagement with informal social networks is a key contributor to health status and may reduce rates of hospitalisation (1).

**Aims**

This session will focus on the role of engaging patients with community supports through cancer treatment and survivorship.

**Method**

The presentation will be based upon a qualitative study of cancer patient experiences and attitudes to community support networks in cancer. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with patients, carers and support network members, undergoing hermeneutic analysis.

**Results**

The qualitative study is currently being undertaken, with 15 interviews conducted thus far, with a likely total of 30 interviews dependant on data saturation.

The presentation will also explore recent international literature regarding community support networks in chronic disease and cancer. It is expected that it will inform the audience of the role, perceptions, types of supports, and potential benefits of community networks in cancer care.

**Conclusion**

Providing cancer patient with community based support network can improve knowledge and resilience through cancer treatment and potentially improve outcomes.

**References** (If applicable)

1. Sarma EA, Kawachi I, Poole EM, Tworoger SS, Giovannucci EL, Fuchs CS, et al. Social integration and survival after diagnosis of colorectal cancer. Cancer. 2018;124(4):833-40.