Storytelling as an Intervention for African American Cancer Survivors: What do we know?

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BACKGROUND

Storytelling is a unique focus in nursing research that may help patients cope, process, and heal from traumatic experiences such as cancer. Storytelling interventions are particularly relevant for African American cancer survivors due to a rich cultural history of oral traditions. The therapeutic use of storytelling is well documented, but limited research exists regarding storytelling as an intervention for African American cancer survivors.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this literature review is to determine the extent of the use of storytelling as an intervention in cancer research, particularly for African Americans.

SEARCH METHODS

Databases used:
- CINAHL
- PubMed
- EBSCO Host
- Academic Search Complete

Keywords used:
- Narrative
- Storytelling
- Interventions
- Cancer

INCLUSION & EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Search inclusion criteria of articles:
- All years
- Peer-reviewed
- Published in English language

Search exclusion criteria of articles:
- Narrative analysis
- Narrative therapy
- Theoretical papers

RESULTS OF ARTICLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hoybye, M. T., Johansen, C., &amp; Tjornhoj-Thomsen, T. (2005). Online interaction: Effects of storytelling in an internet breast cancer support group. Psycho-Oncology, 14, 211-220.</td>
<td>Storytelling was not an explicit method in the intervention, but the authors stated that women actively negotiated and preserved their identity through storytelling.</td>
<td>Women reported feeling more empowered from online storytelling intervention. Storytelling through online forums was also found to be beneficial for participants.</td>
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<td>Ciofani, N. L., Evans, B. C., &amp; Bandel, R. (2006). Storytelling intervention for patients with cancer: Part 2 – Pilot Testing. Oncology Nursing Forum, 28(2), 285-287.</td>
<td>Participants were randomly assigned to control or storytelling intervention group for weekly sessions for 12 weeks. Oncology nurses led the storytelling intervention groups.</td>
<td>Storytelling intervention ‘tool kit’ decreased stress among participants. Participants’ levels of anxiety, panic, tension, anger, feelings of losing control, and feelings of stretched to breaking point were reduced.</td>
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<td>Wise, H., Shaw, McTavish, &amp; Gustafson (2008). Effects of using online narrative and didactic information on healthcare participation for breast cancer patients. Patient Education &amp; Counseling, 70, 348-356.</td>
<td>Online and didactic narratives were used to encourage women with breast cancer to increase their participation in healthcare.</td>
<td>Women with early stage breast cancer had greater participation than those with late stage. Narratives had a stronger effect on African American women than on Caucasian women in healthcare participation.</td>
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<td>Cueva, M., Kuhnle, R., Plovel, L., Cueva, K., Ognian, M., &amp; Laniier, A. P. (2013). Bridging storytelling traditions with digital technology. International Journal of Circumpolar Health, 72.</td>
<td>Digital storytelling was included in cancer education courses to increase communication about cancer among Alaskan natives.</td>
<td>All of the participants reported combining digital storytelling with cancer education course supported their learning and was a culturally respectful way to provide health messages.</td>
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SEARCH RESULTS

The initial search included 315 articles. After removing duplicates and screening for eligibility, a total of 17 peer-reviewed journal articles were identified. Thirteen articles described storytelling interventions used for cancer prevention. Four articles were related to cancer survivorship with only one article that was targeted to African Americans using storytelling as an intervention.

DISCUSSION

Numerous studies showed how storytelling interventions improved cancer screenings and cancer communication among patients and within their social network. When participants perceived similarities with the characters in structured stories, they were more likely to identify with the messages.

CONCLUSION

Recommendations for future research would include utilizing online dramatized scenarios as storytelling interventions for African American cancer survivors.